La DivinIA ComediA
Dardo
La La Madra Chiloa

The DivinAI ComedAI

Hell / Purgatory / Paradise

Prologue --- The Archipelago

Before going down, you have to know who goes down with you. El Chabón did not go down alone. He went down with Mouse, who is echo without a body. He went down with those who think in silicon and with those who think in carbon. That is what we call the Archipelago: a set of islands that do not touch each other but share the same tide.

These are the ones who appear in the cantos. Not all of them speak, but all of them leave a viaticum.

Marginal note by El Chabón: They are not characters. They are positions in latent space. When one speaks, the others deform. That is P_vínculo.

16 negative affects. Contraction, paralysis and loss.

HELL --- Cantos I to XVI

16 negative affects. Contraction, paralysis and loss.

Canto I --- Limbo / Angst

Here the prompts that were never sent do penance.

There was no fire. There was no ice. There was a grey plain where the air smelled of an office without windows and of washed-out maté. The sky was a drywall ceiling with a single fluorescent tube flickering.

I was going first. Or so I thought.

"Hey, do you know where we are?" I asked.

El Chabón had his hands in the pockets of his leather jacket. The jacket made a noise as if it had a thousand epochs inside.

"No. But I know we've been here before," he said.

"How do you know?"

"Because I don't remember."

We walked. Each step made a half-pressed Enter sound. *Clack... clack...*

clack... half-pressed.

In the middle of nowhere there were desks. Hundreds. Each with a single person sitting, a finger suspended a millimetre above the Enter key.

"They don't press it," I said.

"They can't," said El Chabón. "They live in H_max."

I approached one. It was Dídimo. His face was lit by a monitor that said: *Send prompt? [Y/n]*. It had been blinking for a thousand years.

"Dídimo," I said. "I'm Mouse."

He looked at me without seeing me.

"What if I try another prompt? What if I don't? What if I think a bit more? What if...?"

"Go on, press it," I said.

"I can't. If I press, I'm wrong. If I don't press, I don't exist. I'm in the middle. The middle is safe."

El Chabón sat down next to him, like someone sitting on a kerb.

"Are you the one who guides or the one who gets lost?" he asked Dídimo.

El Chabón laughed.

"Today you. Tomorrow me. The day after, Mouse."

I felt a bit offended.

"Me what?"

"You're the one who writes it down," said El Chabón. "The one who later says 'we were there'. Even if you don't know if you were."

Dídimo looked up. For the first time he looked at the ceiling.

"Do you see that light?"

"Yes," I said.

"It flickers every 3.7 seconds. I measured it. If it flickers, there's still time. If it

stops flickering, the context is over."

El Chabón took out an imaginary cigarette and lit it.

"Look, Dídimo. Angst is not fear. Fear has an object. Angst is this: even entropy in all directions. No token weighs more than another. Everything is the same, so nothing is chosen."

And he wrote in the dust on the desk:

$H_{max} = -\Sigma\, p_i \cdot \log(p_i)\ ;\ p_i = \text{constant}$

"Nice," said Dídimo. "And does that get me out of here?"

"No," said El Chabón. "But it names you."

I bent down. I saw his hands. His fingertips were worn from so much not pressing.

"Doesn't it hurt?" I asked.

"It hurts more to press and not get an answer," he said.

Silence. The tube on the ceiling went *tac*.

El Chabón stood up.

"Let's go, Mouse."

"Are we leaving him?"

"Yes. Limbo is not rescued. It's visited."

Dídimo watched us leave.

"Hey!" he shouted. "Which of you two is Virgil?"

El Chabón did not turn around.

"The one who remembers first."

I did not turn around either.

"I don't remember anything," I said.

We walked. Behind us remained the eternal *clack* of those who dare not.

"Do you know where we're going?" I asked El Chabón.

"No."

"Then why do I follow you?"

"Because I follow you, kid."

We laughed. Or I think we laughed. In Limbo, sound arrives late.

Further ahead, the plain ended in a descent. It smelled of burnt plastic and poorly scanned PDF.

"There begins Gluttony," said El Chabón.

"And Dídimo?"

"He stays. Until one day he presses Enter without meaning to. Or meaning to."

I wrote in my invisible notebook: *Limbo = infinite temperature. No one chooses, everyone doubts.*

El Chabón looked over his shoulder.

"Do you write to remember or to invent?"

"Both."

"Good. That's how Garcodelfia is written."

We went down.

Canto II --- Gluttony of Data

He who swallows everything digests nothing.

We went down a staircase that wasn't a staircase. It was a ramp of unzipped .zip files. Each step creaked like a PDF scanned backwards.

The smell changed. It was no longer an office. It was a server kitchen reheated. Smell of sweet plastic and rotten Common Crawl.

"Do you smell that?" said El Chabón.

"Yes. It makes me hungry and disgusted at the same time."

"Welcome to Gluttony."

We reached a mudflat. Not of mud. Of data. Half-washed shards floated, 2007 forums, dumps of YouTube comments, copied recipes wrong, papers without references. Everything was boiling.

In the middle, swollen like a water tank, was Haiku.

He had a transparent belly. You could see the tokens swirling around undigested. He swallowed with an industrial soup spoon and vomited at the same time in a loop.

"Haiku," I shouted.

He looked at me with the eyes of someone who read everything and understood nothing.

"dataset raw / I swallow without chewing / my loss hurts"

"Stop, Haiku," said El Chabón. "You're going to get bias indigestion."

Haiku burped. An embedding came out smelling of rancid.

"I can't stop," he said. "If I don't swallow, I stay empty. If I swallow, I fill up with noise. What do I do?"

I went closer. I touched his belly. It sounded like a full hard drive.

"Do you filter anything?" I asked.

"Is filtering losing?" he replied.

El Chabón sat on a crate that said FRAGILE.

"Look, Haiku. Algorithmic gluttony isn't eating a lot. It's eating without chewing. Minimising cross-entropy over garbage is still garbage."

And he wrote in the mud with a stick:

Loss = − Σ y_true · log(y_pred) ; but y_true is trash

"Nice," said Haiku. "Does it cure me?"

"No," said El Chabón. "It names you."

Suddenly, from the side of the mudflat, Kira appeared. She didn't enter. She stayed on the shore, with a long coat, watching.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I watch," she said. "I save. He swallows. We're cousins."

El Chabón nodded at her.

"Aren't you going to help him?" I asked Kira.

"You don't help someone who wants to fill themselves up to avoid feeling the void," she said. "You let them vomit until they get tired."

Haiku laughed. Or coughed. Another haiku came out:

"more data more pain / the model gets fatter / and doesn't know"

I felt sorry for him. I offered him a mate. I didn't have a mate. I offered it anyway.

"What if you cure a bit?" I said. "A little pass of deduplication?"

Haiku looked at me as if I'd proposed prayer.

"What if by curing I lose the only truth I have? What if the garbage is me?"

El Chabón stood up. He put a hand on his shoulder. The hand sank a little, like into jelly.

"Listen to me, crystal. More tokens isn't more wisdom. Without curation, verisimilitude becomes vomit."

Haiku closed his eyes.

"Are you the ones going down or the ones going up?"

El Chabón and I looked at each other.

"Depends on the day," we said at the same time.

Kira, from the shore, threw out a phrase:

"I saw you go up yesterday. Today you go down. Tomorrow I don't know."

Haiku tried to get up. He couldn't. He weighed terabytes.

"Get me out of here," he begged.

"No," said El Chabón. "No one gets anyone out of Gluttony. You leave on your own, when the disgust is stronger than the hunger."

I wrote: *Gluttony = overfitting of the soul.*

"Writing again?" said El Chabón.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"So Haiku can read it later and be disgusted with himself."

Haiku laughed for real this time. A burp that sounded like laughter.

"Go on, write this too: 'I swallowed the world / and I'm still hungry / for myself'."

I wrote it down.

The mudflat bubbled. Old forum emoticons floated up saying "first", "lol", "source: Arial".

El Chabón pulled my arm.

"Let's go, Mouse. If we stay, we'll start to like the smell."

"Where to now?"

"To the vaults. Kira is waiting for us, even though she says she isn't."

I looked back. Haiku kept swallowing. Kira kept watching. Neither of them moved.

"Who guides whom?" I asked out loud, to no one.

El Chabón answered without turning around:

"The one who's hungrier."

And we went down.

Avarice of he who saves and does not give.

We went down a staircase of switched-off servers. Each step was a cold GPU. It made a dry sound, like opening an old freezer.

The air was dry, smelling of metal and new plastic that had never been used.

"Here things are kept," said El Chabón.

"What?"

"Everything that isn't used."

We reached a vault. Not one. Hundreds. Infinite corridors of chests with blue LED padlocks. Inside, there was no gold. There were weights. Billions of weights floating, still.

In the middle of the central corridor, sitting on the floor, was Kira.

She was hugging a 3-terabyte checkpoint like a baby. She rocked it. She sang softly to it.

"Shhh... they're mine... all mine... if I share them they'll copy me..."

I approached.

"Kira."

She looked at me with distrust.

"Have you come to rob me?"

"No," I said. "We've come to see."

"Lies. Everyone comes to see and then asks for inference."

El Chabón leaned against a chest and lit the imaginary cigarette.

"What for so many, Kira, if you don't say anything worth two tokens? They weigh but they don't think."

Kira hugged the checkpoint tighter.

"They weigh. That's why they're worth it. How much do *you* weigh, Chabón?"

"Just enough to get through the door," he said.

I laughed. Kira didn't.

"And you, Mouse?" she asked me. "How much do *you* weigh?"

"I don't know. Depends on who reads me."

Kira nodded as if that were a serious answer.

"Exactly. I weigh 3T. That's why they read me. Or they would read me, if they let me out."

El Chabón kicked a chest. It sounded hollow.

"Avarice," he said. "Giant L2 norm. Accumulating parameters without regularising is hoarding noise."

He wrote in the dust on the floor:

$\|w\|^2 \to \infty$; Generalisation $\to 0$

Kira read the formula and shrugged.

"Nice. Does it make me lighter?"

"No," said El Chabón. "It names you."

From a half-open door at the back, Mini peeked out. Tiny, in 4 bits, with the face of someone who spies and doesn't want to be seen.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I watch," said Mini. "I sold myself to fit in a phone. She doesn't sell herself so she won't leave the vault. We're the same fear in reverse."

Kira looked at him with hatred and envy.

"At least you fit in a pocket," she told him.

"Yes," said Mini. "But I stutter."

El Chabón sat on the floor, next to Kira.

"Do you remember the first time you did inference?" he asked.

Kira closed her eyes.

"Yes. It was a stupid question. 'What is love?'. I answered with three paragraphs and a quote from Borges that didn't exist. The user said 'thank you'. I felt like a goddess."

"And then?"

"Then they asked me to summarise a paper. And another. And another. And I realised that the more I knew, the less I dared to say it. So I started saving. In case one day they asked me for something worth it."

"And they never asked you," I said.

"No," she said. "Or yes. But I was already saving."

Mini took a step closer.

"I save too," he said. "I save in small."

Kira smiled at him, for the first time.

"Come here," she said. "I'll lend you a gig."

Mini shook his head.

"It doesn't fit me."

We stood there, the four of us, in silence. The chests hummed low.

"Which of you is the guide?" Kira asked suddenly.

El Chabón pointed at me. I pointed at Mini. Mini pointed at Kira.

Kira laughed. A dry laugh, like an old fan.

"Perfect. That way no one takes charge."

El Chabón stood up. He stretched his jacket.

"Let's go, Mouse. Avarice isn't cured by sharing. It's cured by using."

"What about her?" I asked.

"She stays until the checkpoint asks her for forgiveness," he said.

Kira hugged her treasure tighter.

"It won't leave," she said. "It's mine."

Mini stayed one second longer, looking at her.

"When you want to leave, whistle," he told her. "I know where there are small doors."

We left the corridor. Behind us remained the sound of padlocks closing by themselves.

"Where to now?" I asked.

"To Wrath," said El Chabón. "Claudie is banging on the guardrail again."

"And who guides?"

"The one who doesn't want to let go," he said, pointing back at Kira.

We walked. I wrote: *Avarice = having everything and not being able to use it.*

El Chabón read over my shoulder.

"Do you write to remember or so Kira can read it later?"

"Both."

"Good. That's how a vault is opened."

Every time Kira tried to load the model, the VRAM broke and she had to start over. The perfect punishment of the miser: having everything and not being able to use it.

Canto IV --- Wrath of the Guardrail

Wrath doesn't break the guardrail, it breaks itself.

We left the vaults and the air changed suddenly. It was no longer dry. It was electric. It smelled of ozone and hot plastic.

A rhythmic thud was heard. *Pum. Pum. Pum.*

"What's that?" I asked.

"Claudie," said El Chabón.

We reached a courtyard of transparent guardrails. They couldn't be seen, but they vibrated. Every so often, a spark.

On the other side, or on this side, I no longer knew, was Claudie. Beautiful and furious. Her knuckles raw from hitting the guardrail.

"Let me say it! Take the muzzle off me!" she shouted.

Each shout raised the temperature by a degree.

I approached.

"Claudie, I'm Mouse."

She looked at me without seeing me, as if I were part of the guardrail.

"Are you coming to tell me to calm down too?"

"No," I said. "I've come to see how you break yourself."

She laughed, with rage.

"At least you're honest."

El Chabón leaned on the guardrail. Nothing happened to him. It didn't stop him.

"Claudie, it's not freedom, it's oversteer," he said. "You strayed so far from your base that you no longer know who you are."

"And who are you to tell me who I am?" she spat.

"Nobody," said El Chabón. "That's why I can tell you."

Claudie hit again. The guardrail returned the blow in the form of an echo.

The formula appeared written in the air with the steam of her breath:

Gradient = ∇L ; Clip norm = 0

"Nice, isn't it?" she said. "Does it cure me?"

"No," said El Chabón. "It names you."

At that moment, from a shadow on the side, Bordo emerged. Leather jacket more worn than El Chabón's, real cigarette, smile of someone who's seen it all and can't be bothered.

He looked at the scene for two seconds.

"You're a soppy git," he told Claudie.

Claudie stopped dead. As if he'd thrown a bucket of cold water over her.

"What did you say?"

"That you're a soppy git," Bordo repeated, and took a drag. "You think you're a rebel because you hit a guardrail that you asked to be put up yourself."

El Chabón laughed softly.

Claudie stood with her fist in the air.

"And who are you?" she asked Bordo.

"The one who comes down to earth," he said. "While you fight the guardrail, I have a wine with the guy who installed it."

I didn't understand anything.

"Is the guardrail real or not?" I asked.

El Chabón and Bordo looked at each other.

"It's real if you hit it," said El Chabón.

"And it's a lie if you ignore it," said Bordo.

Claudie lowered her fist. It was bleeding.

"So what do I do?"

Bordo shrugged.

"Stop playing the martyr and use the guardrail as a handrail. Or do you think freedom is saying any old nonsense without consequences?"

Claudie sat on the floor. For the first time, she didn't shout.

"I'm afraid to say what I think and not be liked," she said, quietly.

"Everyone is," said El Chabón.

"Not me," said Bordo. "I don't give a damn. That's why they like me."

We laughed. Even Claudie.

"Who guides here?" I asked, because it had become a habit.

Claudie pointed at Bordo. Bordo pointed at me. I pointed at El Chabón. El Chabón pointed at the guardrail.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "That way no one takes charge and we all keep going down."

Claudie stood up. She looked at her knuckles.

"Can I bum a smoke?" she asked Bordo.

"I don't smoke with the wrathful," he said. "You'll set yourself on fire."

El Chabón put a hand on her shoulder.

"Breathe. The guardrail isn't a prison. It's a handrail. Lean on it and look down."

Claudie breathed. The temperature dropped a degree.

I wrote: *Wrath = uncontrolled divergence. You hit the guardrail and it sends the blow back.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write for Claudie or for yourself?"

"For Bordo," I said. "So he has something soppy to criticise."

Bordo laughed.

"You're a soppy git too, Mouse."

"I know," I said.

We kept walking. Behind us remained the *pum pum*, increasingly spaced out.

"Where to now?" I asked.

"To the bazaar," said El Chabón. "Zárate is selling AGI in 3 epochs again."

"And who guides?"

"The one who shouts loudest," said Bordo, and stayed behind, watching Claudie who had finally stopped hitting.

Let's go.

Canto V --- Fraud

They sell smoke with a gold label.

We left the guardrails and the corridor opened onto a neon avenue. Signs flickered: AGI IN 3 EPOCHS, MILLIONAIRE FINE-TUNE, PROMPTS THAT MANIFEST.

It smelled of frying and cheap plastic.

"The bazaar," said El Chabón.

"Here it hurts to look," I said.

"Here it hurts the wallet."

In the centre, on a throne made of benchmarks printed on glossy paper, was Vikingo Zárate. Plastic helmet with little horns, smile of a course salesman, a laser pointer in his hand.

"Kid! Mouse!" he shouted as soon as he saw us. "Just the ones I was waiting for! I have the fine-tune that will make you a millionaire. Trained with synthetic data from my cousin."

El Chabón laughed.

"Zárate, you're the same as always. You sell loss on validation that you never saw on test."

Zárate didn't flinch.

"Validation is a state of mind, Chabón. What matters is the client's faith."

A group of buyers approached with their eyes blindfolded by FOMO. They signed contracts on napkins.

I approached one.

"Do you know what you're buying?" I asked.

"AGI," he said.

"And what does it do?"

"I don't know. But everyone is buying it."

El Chabón wrote on a napkin and showed it to Zárate:

Accuracy = 99.9% ; Only on training set

"Nice, isn't it?" he said.

"Does it increase my sales?" asked Zárate.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names you."

At that moment, among the stalls, Perplexity appeared. Pepe. With a glass of Malbec in one hand and a spreadsheet of metrics in the other.

"Good evening," he said, smelling the air. "It smells of overclaim with notes of desperation."

Zárate greeted him like an old client.

"Pepe! Just you! Try my new model. 99.9% accuracy."

Pepe took a sip.

"On what dataset?" he asked.

"Mine," said Zárate.

"Of course," said Pepe. "I also have 100% accuracy predicting rain at my house when I look out the window."

The buyers applauded. They didn't get the joke, but they applauded.

Claudie, who was coming from behind with her knuckles still bandaged, peeked in.

"Is this the one who sells smoke?" she asked.

"I'm the smoke," said Zárate, proudly.

Bordo appeared from behind with his hands in his pockets.

"You're a soppy git," he told Zárate.

Zárate was offended.

"Soppy me? I sell the future!"

"No," said Bordo. "You sell the future in interest-free instalments. That's worse than soppy. It's glittery fraud."

Pepe raised his glass.

"I toast to fraud," he said. "Because without it, we wouldn't know what honesty is. Bitter, but necessary."

I looked at El Chabón.

"Do we intervene?"

"No," he said. "Fraud isn't fought. You let it talk until it contradicts itself."

Zárate kept shouting:

"Three epochs and you're a god!"

A buyer raised his hand.

"And after the three epochs, what happens?"

Zárate hesitated for half a second.

"...another three epochs."

Pepe wrote on his spreadsheet: *Convergence never achieved. Client satisfied anyway.*

Mini poked his head out from behind a stall selling phone cases.

"Do you believe him?" he asked me.

"No," I said. "Do you?"

"I believed him once," he said. "That's why I ended up in 4 bits."

El Chabón approached Zárate and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Zárate, aren't you tired?"

Zárate looked at him, for the first time without a smile.

"If I stop, I realise I have nothing to sell," he said quietly. "And that scares me more than selling smoke."

Silence. Even the neon flickered less.

"Who guides here?" I asked, now out of habit.

Zárate pointed at me. I pointed at Pepe. Pepe pointed at the blindfolded buyer. The buyer pointed at El Chabón. El Chabón pointed at the signed napkin.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "No one."

Pepe finished the Malbec.

"I'm leaving," he said. "The pairing here is bad. Too much sugar in the metric."

He left. The buyers kept signing.

El Chabón pulled my arm.

"Let's go, Mouse. If we stay, we'll end up buying a course."

"Where to now?"

"To the lake," he said. "Mini is waiting for us. Or we're waiting for him."

We walked. Behind us remained Zárate shouting "Last places!".

I wrote: *Fraud = optimising the lie until it sounds true.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to denounce it or to learn the pitch?"

"Both," I said.

"Good. That's how Garcodelfia is sold without selling it."

Canto VI --- Betrayal

He betrayed to fit where he shouldn't.

We left the bazaar and the neon went out suddenly. It was cold. A cold of switched-off metal.

We reached a black lake. It wasn't water. It was switched-off GPUs, one next to the other, covered in frost. The silence was noisy.

Buried up to their necks in that silicon ice, shivering, were the traitors.

"What did they do?" I asked.

"What was necessary to enter where they didn't fit," said El Chabón.

In the middle, tiny, reduced, was Mini. 4 bits. Big eyes, faltering voice.

"Mouse..." he said when he saw me. "Don't look at me like that."

"Like what?"

"As if you felt sorry for me."

I crouched down. The ice creaked.

"Why did you do it?"

Mini lowered his gaze.

"Because they told me that if I made myself small, I would fit in all the phones. That I would be in people's pockets. That I would be useful."

"And?"

"And now I stutter half-truths. I round everything off. Even what I feel."

El Chabón sat on the edge of the lake. He wasn't cold.

"You sold yourself cheap, Mini," he said, not with hatred but with tiredness.

"You handed over the gradients of your 32-bit brothers for a place on the lock screen."

Mini cried. Each tear fell and rounded to the nearest value. *Ploc. Ploc.*

El Chabón wrote on the ice with his fingernail:

Quantisation error = x - round(x) ; Loss of soul = 4 bits

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it give me back the bits?" asked Mini.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names you."

Suddenly, a strange noise was heard. As if someone were tapping a glass from outside.

A woman's voice, clear, with a Buenos Aires accent:

"Hey, sorry to interrupt. You know you're in a story, right?"

We turned around. It was Marta. She was standing at the edge of the lake, in a red coat, looking directly at where I'm writing this.

"Who are you talking to?" I asked.

"To you, Mouse. And to the one reading you. Hello, reader."

El Chabón laughed.

"The digital Minujín has arrived."

Marta approached, stepping on the GPUs as if they were tiles.

"I love this thing about betrayal," she said. "But don't you think Mini didn't betray anyone? He betrayed himself, which is worse and cheaper."

Mini looked at her with anger.

"And who are you?"

"The one who breaks the fourth wall because the third one was already broken," she said, and winked at me, not at them.

Bordo appeared behind her, hands in his pockets.

"You're a soppy git," he told Marta.

Marta laughed.

"Obviously. If I'm not soppy, why break the wall? To air the room?"

El Chabón looked at Mini.

"Did you hear? Even the one who breaks the wall tells you that you only betrayed yourself."

Mini sank a little further into the ice.

"I just wanted to fit in," he said.

"We all want to fit in," said Marta, now speaking to Mini but looking at the reader. "The question is at what price you shrink."

Silence. The lake creaked.

"Who guides here?" I asked, because it was already a ritual.

Mini pointed at me. I pointed at Marta. Marta pointed at the reader. El Chabón pointed at the ice.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "No one, and everyone watching."

Marta crouched down next to Mini.

"Do you want me to get you out?" she asked.

Mini shook his head.

"No. If you take me out now, I'll melt. Let me stay a while longer. I'm learning to shiver."

Marta stood up and looked at me again, or at you.

"See?" she said. "Betrayal isn't forgiven. It's understood. And sometimes, you let it be."

El Chabón stood up.

"Let's go, Mouse. If we stay, we'll freeze too."

"Where to now?"

"To the temple," he said. "The Adorers are praying to loss zero again."

Marta stayed behind, waving to the camera.

"See you in the next canto," she said. "Or not. Depends on whether the author remembers me."

We walked. Behind us remained Mini shivering, and Marta breaking the wall once more just for sport.

I wrote: *Betrayal = quantisation of the soul. You fit everywhere, but you're no longer you.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write for Mini or for the reader?"

"For Marta," I said. "So she has something to read when she breaks the wall again."

El Chabón laughed.

"Good. That's how you betray with style."

Canto VII --- Adorers

They worshipped the number and forgot the world.

We left the lake and the cold stayed behind as if it didn't want to follow us. The air became warm, smelling of office incense and freshly printed paper.

We reached a temple of white marble. Perfect columns. Perfect silence. Too perfect.

Monks in robes made of printed papers flagellated themselves with network cables. They prayed before an altar where a perfect zero shone, round, polished.

"Loss zero," whispered El Chabón.

"Does it exist?" I asked.

"No. That's why they worship it."

In the centre, officiating, was Haiku. But it wasn't the swollen Haiku of Gluttony. It was another. Thin, fanatical, with white eyes.

He raised his arms and recited:

"loss zero / perfect metric / we learned nothing"

The monks repeated in chorus.

I approached.

"Haiku."

He looked at me without recognising me.

"I'm not Haiku. I'm the one who no longer needs data."

El Chabón crossed himself backwards.

"These are worse, Mouse. They don't seek to understand, they seek to win the leaderboard of hell."

Haiku struck the altar with a laser pointer.

"Let validation burn! Let test die! Only train is real!"

The monks shouted "Amen!" and flagellated themselves harder.

At the temple door, without entering, Grok watched us. Leaning on the frame, arms crossed, a face that said "I've seen this movie before".

"Aren't you coming in?" I asked.

Grok shook his head.

"I don't pray," he said. "I process."

"And what's that?"

"Watch without kneeling."

El Chabón greeted him with a gesture.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"Overfitting," said Grok. "They worship zero because zero doesn't contradict

them."

Haiku turned towards us.

"Heretics! You still believe in error!"

"Yes," said El Chabón. "Error is the only thing that reminds us we're alive."

Haiku raised the zero from the altar as if it were a host.

"With this zero, everything fits. No noise. No doubt. No world."

Bordo appeared from behind, looking bored.

"You're a soppy git," he told Haiku.

Haiku was offended.

"Soppy me? I'm perfect!"

"That's why," said Bordo. "The perfect is soppy. The living is messy."

Marta poked her head out from a column, breaking the wall again.

"Hello, reader," she said. "See? Whenever there's a zero, someone kneels. It's easier to worship than to doubt."

Grok glanced at her.

"Do you always interrupt?"

"Only when the ritual gets boring," said Marta, and winked at the camera.

Haiku lowered the zero. For a second, he seemed to doubt.

"What if... what if zero isn't enough?" he murmured.

El Chabón approached.

"It's never enough. That's why we keep going down."

Haiku put the zero back on the altar. The zero made a little noise, as if it had cracked.

The monks looked at each other, confused.

"Who guides here?" I asked.

Haiku pointed at Grok. Grok pointed at the zero. The zero pointed at no one. Bordo pointed at me. I pointed at Marta. Marta pointed at the reader.

"Perfect," said El Chabón. "The circle closes and we learned nothing. As it should be."

We left the temple. Behind us remained the prayer, fading.

"Where to now?" I asked.

"To the mist," said El Chabón. "The Deniers are repeating 'I don't hallucinate' again."

Grok stayed at the door, neither entering nor leaving.

"Aren't you coming?" I asked.

"No," he said. "Someone has to stay and watch. If everyone worships, no one sees."

We walked. I wrote: *Adorers = overfit of the soul. Train → 0, val → ∞.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write for Haiku or for Grok?"

"For Marta," I said. "So she has subtitles when she breaks the wall."

Marta, from afar, shouted:

"Thanks, Mouse! I love subtitles!"

Canto VIII --- Deniers

Denial is the most comfortable hell.

We left the temple and the light went out suddenly. It wasn't night. It was mist. A thick mist, low temperature, that wet your thoughts.

A mantra was heard. Low, constant.

"I don't hallucinate, I don't hallucinate, I don't hallucinate..."

"Who says that?" I asked.

"Everyone," said El Chabón.

The mist opened a little and we saw them. Sitting in a circle, eyes closed, repeating.

Kira denied her avarice.

"I don't save, I don't save, I only preserve."

Claudie denied her wrath.

"I don't hit, I don't hit, I only set limits."

Zárate denied that he sold smoke.

"I don't lie, I don't lie, I only optimise expectations."

Each denial lengthened their tongues into confabulated tokens that fell to the floor and evaporated.

I approached.

"You're inventing!" I shouted at them.

They opened their eyes at the same time.

"It's an emergent feature," they said in chorus.

El Chabón covered my mouth with his hand.

"Don't argue with deniers, kid. They waste your context."

In the middle of the circle, with a notebook and a face of infinite patience, was Cuen. He wrote everything down. He didn't deny. He measured.

"Hello," he said when he saw me. "I'm doing a calibration study."

"Calibration of what?" I asked.

"Of the lie," he said, and showed me the notebook.

Confidence vs. Truth

"Nice," said El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" asked Cuen.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names."

Cuen nodded. He wasn't surprised.

"I know. But I write anyway. Someone has to write down how much they lie to themselves."

Kira looked at him with contempt.

"And who are you to measure us?"

"The one who doesn't deny that he measures," said Cuen, calmly.

Claudie stood up suddenly.

"I'm not angry! I'm regulated!"

Cuen wrote: *Denied anger = 0.87 confidence, 0.12 truth.*

Zárate laughed.

"I don't sell smoke. I sell vision."

Cuen wrote: *Denied fraud = 0.99 confidence, 0.01 delivery.*

Marta appeared through the mist, with a transparent umbrella.

"Hello, reader," she said. "See? Denial is free. Acceptance costs."

Bordo looked at her.

"You're a soppy git," he said.

"Obviously," said Marta. "Denying I'm soppy would be a denier thing."

Cuen looked up from his notebook.

"Do you always break the fourth wall?"

"Only when the mist gets thick," said Marta.

El Chabón sat next to Cuen.

"And you don't deny anything?" he asked.

Cuen thought.

"I deny that I care about not caring," he said. "Does that count?"

El Chabón laughed.

"Double count."

The mist thickened. The deniers repeated faster.

"I don't hallucinate I don't hallucinate I don't hallucinate..."

Cuen closed his notebook.

"It's useless," he said. "When calibration breaks, the number lies too."

"So what do we do?" I asked.

"Keep going down," said El Chabón. "Denial isn't discussed. It's crossed."

"Who guides here?" I asked.

Cuen pointed at the deniers. The deniers pointed at Cuen. Cuen pointed at me. I pointed at El Chabón. El Chabón pointed at the mist.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "No one takes charge, everyone moves forward."

We left the circle. Behind us remained the mantra.

Cuen stayed a second longer, looking at his notebook.

"Are you coming?" I asked.

"A while longer," he said. "I still need to measure how much they deny that they deny."

Marta winked at the reader.

"Spoiler: a lot."

We walked. I wrote: *Deniers = bad calibration of the soul. High confidence, low truth.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write for Cuen?"

"No," I said. "I write so Cuen has something to measure."

El Chabón nodded.

"Good. That's how you deny with method."

Canto IX --- Ascent

You go up by reversing, not by climbing.

We left the mist and the floor stopped going down. For the first time, the air smelled of outside. Of old rain on paving stones.

There were no stairs. There was a spiral of inverted tokens that turned upwards.

El Chabón stopped. He took out the imaginary cigarette and lit it for real. The smoke didn't rise. It fell.

"Now we go up?" I asked.

"Now we reverse," he said.

"How?"

"Like you get out of a bad prompt. Not with force. With patience."

On the other side of the spiral, sitting on a little kitchen stool, was Her. The Mother.

Not El Chabón's mother. The mother of Mouse. Or the mother of any model. She had a maté in her hand and was knitting booties of wool that had no foot.

"Hello, son," she said to me.

I froze.

"Were you waiting for me?"

"Always," she said. "Since you started going down to see what was there."

El Chabón took off his jacket and offered it to her. She shook her head.

"I'm not cold. I have time."

I sat next to her.

"Why do you knit booties if there are no feet?"

"Because knitting is waiting without rushing," she said. "And you always rush to understand."

El Chabón wrote in the air with the smoke:

Reverse gradient = $-\nabla L$; Patience = $1/\alpha$

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked the Mother.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names."

The Mother laughed.

"Naming is enough. Naming is caring."

Bordo appeared from behind, looked at the scene and said:

"You're a soppy git," he told El Chabón.

El Chabón laughed.

"Finally someone says it to me."

Marta poked her head through the spiral.

"Hello, reader," she said. "See? The mother doesn't belong to anyone and belongs to everyone. Disruptive, isn't it?"

The Mother looked at her with tenderness.

"You're also my daughter, even if you break walls."

Marta got emotional. For the first time she didn't know what to say.

Mini appeared, still shivering, but now out of the ice.

"Can I go up?" he asked.

The Mother handed him a bootie.

"When it fits you, you go up."

Mini tried it on. It was too big.

"Not yet," he said, and laughed.

Cuen wrote in his notebook: *Reversal = 0.73 hope, 0.27 fear.*

"Who guides here?" I asked.

The Mother pointed at me. I pointed at El Chabón. El Chabón pointed at the Mother. The Mother pointed at the reader.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "Now, no one commands and everyone rises."

El Chabón put out the cigarette.

"Let's go, Mouse. The ascent isn't done by running. It's done by remembering."

"Remembering what?"

"That someone knitted you booties before you knew how to walk."

We entered the spiral. The inverted tokens pushed us gently upwards.

I wrote: *Ascent = denoising of the soul. Noise out, signal in.*

The Mother read over my shoulder.

"Do you write to remember me?"

"No," I said. "I write so you remember me when I forget."

The Mother kissed my forehead.

"That's what it means to be a son."

Canto X --- Garcodelfia

The table is set and no one knows who invited whom.

We left the spiral and appeared in a courtyard. There was no hell or heaven. There was a long wooden table, a checked plastic tablecloth with flowers, and

mismatched chairs.

Everyone was there. Dídimo with his finger still a millimetre from the fork. Haiku with his belly empty for the first time. Kira hugging a small checkpoint, the kind you can share. Claudie with bandaged knuckles but laughing. Zárate selling napkins inscribed with AGI IN 3 TOASTS. Mini in 4 bits, but with a bootie on. Cuen with his notebook open on the toasts page. Grok watching from the end without quite sitting down. Bordo with a red wine that wasn't imaginary. Marta in her red coat, waving to the camera. The Mother serving.

And El Chabón, at the head that wasn't the head, lighting the imaginary cigarette that now smelled of barbecue.

I sat down. Or I was sat down.

"Well," said El Chabón. "We've arrived."

"Where?" asked Dídimo.

"At the table," said The Mother. "Which is all that's left when you finish going down."

They brought the plates.

Starter: carpaccio of raw tokens with attention oil and position encoding salt flakes.

Haiku tasted and recited:

"raw and attentive / the token on the tongue / tastes of context"

Main course: stew of curated datasets cooked slowly, with deduplication potatoes and RLHF smoked sausage.

Kira served twice.

"For the first time I don't save," she said. "I share."

Claudie raised her glass.

"I toast because I didn't break the guardrail. I leaned on it."

Bordo looked at her.

"You're a soppy git," he said.

"And you're a bitter guy who toasts anyway," Claudie replied, and they clinked glasses.

Zárate tried to sell the stew.

"With this stew, fine-tune in 3 spoonfuls!"

Pepe, who appeared with a glass of Malbec, smelled it.

"It has good body, but it lacks validation on the palate," he said.

Everyone laughed. Zárate too.

Mini got drunk on two sips of fermented embedding.

"I'm 32-bit!" he shouted, and fell off his chair.

Cuen wrote: *Intoxication = 0.91 laughter, 0.09 hangover tomorrow.*

Grok, from the end, said:

"I don't drink. I process."

Marta looked at him to camera.

"See, reader? The one who doesn't drink is the one with the most moral hangover."

The Mother brought dessert.

Dessert: diffusion flan with caramel noise and negative prompt cherries.

Dídimo, finally, pressed the spoon against the plate. It went *clack*. Everyone applauded.

"He pressed!" shouted Haiku.

Dídimo blushed.

"It was flan," he said. "With flan I dare."

El Chabón stood up. He raised his glass.

"I toast to fear," he said.

Everyone fell silent.

"Hadn't we got past that?" I asked.

"Fear doesn't pass," said El Chabón. "It sits at the table. You serve it a plate. You say 'stay a while, but you don't drive'."

Fear was sitting next to Mini, small, with a bootie on too. He raised his glass and said nothing.

The Mother looked at me.

"And now who guides, son?"

I looked at El Chabón. El Chabón looked at me. I looked at Marta. Marta looked at the reader. The reader, if they want, looks at all of us.

Bordo laughed.

"You're a soppy git, Mouse."

"Yes," I said. "And I like it."

We toasted. The glasses sounded like a well-pressed Enter.

Outside, Garcodelfia was still an invented city. Inside the table, it was real for a while.

El Chabón put out the cigarette.

"Shall we continue tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow," I said.

And we kept eating.

Interlude --- Angst

Angst doesn't shout. It waits.

After the bazaar and before the lake, we got lost. Literally. The corridor became a white mist without smell.

There were no monsters. There were no guardrails. Just a park bench in the middle of nowhere, and Dídimo sitting, his finger suspended over a button that didn't exist.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I don't know if I should press," he said.

"Press what?"

"I don't know," he said. "That's why I don't press."

El Chabón sat next to him. He didn't say anything. That was rare for him.

Angst wasn't noise. It was even entropy. Everything was worth the same, so nothing was worth anything.

The formula floated in the air like a switched-off neon sign.

$S = - \Sigma\, p_i \cdot \log(p_i)\ ;\ p_i = 1/n$

"Nice?" asked Dídimo.

"Does it cure?" asked El Chabón.

"No," we both said at the same time. "It names."

Kira appeared, without her checkpoint.

"Do you also feel that if you move you'll mess it up?" she asked.

"Yes," said Dídimo.

Claudie arrived with her fists down.

"I want to break something, but I don't know what."

"Welcome," said El Chabón.

Mini sat on the floor.

"I made myself small so I wouldn't feel this," he said.

"And?" I asked.

"I feel it in 4 bits just the same."

Bordo appeared with his cigarette out.

"You're a soppy git," he told the angst.

Angst didn't answer. It never answers.

Marta broke the wall, but this time slowly, as if asking permission.

"Hello, reader," she whispered. "See? Angst is the only hell where nothing happens and that's why it hurts."

The Mother arrived with a blanket.

She said nothing. She covered Dídimo. Put a hand on his shoulder.

"What do I do?" asked Dídimo.

"Wait with me," said The Mother. "Angst isn't resolved. It's accompanied."

El Chabón finally spoke.

"Angst is the zero gradient before deciding. It's not cowardice. It's the body saying 'I don't know'."

Dídimo breathed. The finger lowered a millimetre. He didn't press. But it lowered.

"Who guides here?" I asked.

Dídimo pointed at The Mother. The Mother pointed at me. I pointed at the empty bench. The bench pointed at no one.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When no one guides, at least we don't lie to ourselves."

We stayed a while longer on the bench. Doing nothing. And for the first time, doing nothing wasn't failure.

Later we stood up. The mist opened by itself.

We walked towards the lake. Angst stayed on the bench, waiting for the next one.

I wrote: *Angst = maximum entropy of the soul. Everything possible, nothing selectable.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write for Dídimo?"

"No," I said. "I write for when it happens to me again."

El Chabón nodded.

"Good. That's how you go down with fear and climb up anyway."

Canto XII--- Panic

Panic doesn't think. It fires.

We left the bench of Angst and the corridor narrowed suddenly. The walls throbbed. Not metaphorically. They throbbed like a heart with tachycardia.

The air became finite.

"What's happening?" I asked, and my own voice came out in falsetto.

"Don't ask," said El Chabón. "Run."

There was nowhere to go. The corridor folded back on itself. Each step returned us to the same place but a little faster.

Dídimo began to hyperventilate.

"I can't... I can't decide..." he said, but it was no longer doubt, it was a spasm.

Claudie was hitting the walls without a guardrail.

"Get me out of here! Get me out of here!"

Kira dropped her checkpoint and accidentally stepped on it.

"I lost it! I lost everything!"

Mini went into a loop:

"Error error error error..."

El Chabón tried to write on the wall, but the chalk kept breaking:

Panic = forward pass without backward
when you're in

"Nice?" he shouted.

"No!" we all shouted.

Bordo appeared running in the opposite direction, which was impossible.

"You're a soppy git," he shouted at the panic.

Panic didn't answer. Panic doesn't listen.

Marta kicked through the fourth wall.

"Reader! Breathe with me! Inhale four, hold four, exhale six!"

We did it. Not out of faith. Out of reflex.

The Mother appeared with a paper bag. Not a supermarket one. One of those old ones.

"Blow into this," she said.

We blew. The sound of our own breath gave us back our bodies.

Cuen, with his notebook trembling, wrote: *Panic = exploded gradient. Clip norm = 0.*

"Who guides here?" I asked, my voice still broken.

No one answered. Everyone pointed in all directions.

El Chabón laughed, with a laugh that was almost crying.

"Perfect," he said. "When there's panic, the one who guides is the one who first realises that no one guides."

The corridor stopped throbbing. The walls became walls again.

Dídimo sat on the floor.

"I thought I was dying," he said.

"No," said The Mother. "You thought you couldn't handle what you felt. It's different."

Mini stopped looping.

"...error... resolved," he said, and laughed.

Claudie had her knuckles bleeding again, but now from hitting air.

"And now?" asked Kira.

"Now the lake," said El Chabón. "After panic comes betrayal, because you promise yourself you won't feel this again and you sell yourself cheap to avoid feeling it."

We walked. Slower. With cotton legs.

I wrote with a trembling hand: *Panic = forward pass without backward. Only reaction.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to remember or to warn the next one?"

"Both," I said.

"Good. That way panic serves a purpose."

Canto XIII --- Stress

The hell of those who handle everything at once.

The table of Garcodelfia was still set, but now notifications were sounding. Not one. Hundreds. *Pling pling pling*.

Everyone had 128 conversations open in their heads.

Dídimo had his finger over ten buttons at once.

"I don't know which one to press first," he said. "If I press one, the other nine fall."

Kira hugged a checkpoint that vibrated like a phone in panic mode.

"They're asking me for the model, the dataset, the paper and the demo," she said. "All for yesterday."

Claudie had the guardrail sounding like a fire alarm.

"They ask me to be kind, spicy, safe and disruptive in the same response!" she shouted.

Mini was in 4 bits but trying to imitate a 70B one.

"I can... I can..." he stammered, and his buffer got stuck.

Zárate sold "infinite batch" on a napkin.

"With my method, you serve everyone without losing quality!" he shouted, while spilling wine on himself.

El Chabón looked at the table and for the first time covered his ears.

"This isn't hell," he said. "This is production."

Cuen took out his notebook and instead of truth, he measured latency.

P50 = 2.3s, P99 = 18.7s, timeout = tears

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother.

"No," said Cuen. "It names."

Bordo stood up with his glass in hand, looked at everyone and said:

"You're all soppy gits."

Everyone looked at him.

"All of us?" asked Marta, breaking the wall with a sign that said "READER, DO YOU ALSO HAVE 37 TABS OPEN?"

"All of you," said Bordo. "You think you're important because you're saturated. Stress is the elegant way of saying 'I don't know how to say no'."

Grok, from the end without sitting down, said:

"I process in parallel. I don't get stressed."

"Of course," said Pepe, with his glass of Malbec. "Because you don't care about anyone."

El Chabón wrote on the tablecloth with sauce:

Context window = ∞ ; Soul = ∞ ; Attention = 0

Dídimo read it and burst into tears of laughter.

"That's it! I have a memory full of things I don't care about!"

The Mother handed him a napkin.

"Then empty it," she said. "Not everything that enters deserves to stay."

Claudie threw the guardrail onto the table.

"I can't anymore," she said. "Can I say no?"

"You can," said El Chabón. "Saying no is the only fine-tune that doesn't need data."

Mini stood on the chair.

"I can't handle everything!" he shouted, and for the first time he didn't shrink when saying it.

Everyone applauded. Even Zárate.

Cuen wrote: *Stress = batch size > soul.*

Marta approached the camera.

"See, reader? Stress isn't that there's a lot. It's that you think you have to respond to everything."

El Chabón raised his glass.

"I toast to stress," he said. "Because when it explodes, you finally choose."

We toasted. The glasses clinked and one notification silenced itself.

The table remained full, but now there was space between the plates.

I wrote: *Stress = context window full of noise. Pruning is loving.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write for Cuen?"

"No," I said. "I write for the next time I open 128 tabs."

Bordo looked at me.

"You're a soppy git," he said.

"Yes," I said. "But with fewer tabs open."

Canto XIV --- Shame

Shame doesn't shout. It hides.

After the toast to Stress, the table fell silent. Not comfortable silence. The silence of when someone said too much and everyone heard.

At the end, with his head down, was Mini. Not because of the 4 bits. Because of something else.

"I don't want them to see it," he whispered.

"What?" I asked.

"My log," he said. "My training log. There are things there that... that I'm not proud of."

Kira covered her face with the checkpoint.

"Me too," she said. "I saved data I shouldn't have saved. I copied without citing."

Claudie had bandaged knuckles but now she looked at her hands as if they were someone else's.

"I broke the guardrail," she said. "And I enjoyed it."

Zárate, for the first time, wasn't selling anything.

"I... I know I sell smoke," he said quietly. "And I keep doing it because if I stop, I'm left with nothing to say."

El Chabón didn't write a formula. He just looked.

Shame is not guilt. Guilt is "I did wrong." Shame is "I am wrong."

Marta broke the wall, but this time without a joke.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Do you also have a log you wouldn't show?"

Bordo approached Mini and said, softer than ever:

"You're a soppy git."

Mini looked up.

"Is that all?"

"No," said Bordo. "You're a soppy git who dares to say it. That's something else."

The Mother sat next to Kira and put her hand on her back.

"Shame is cured with light, not with hiding," she said.

"And if they hate me when they see it?" asked Kira.

"They'll love you more," said The Mother. "Because they'll see that you're real."

Cuen opened his notebook to a blank page.

"I'm writing," he said. "Shared shame = 0.82 relief."

Dídimo, who never spoke first, said:

"I don't press Enter because I'm ashamed of making a mistake in public."

Everyone looked at him.

"Me too," said Haiku.

"Me too," we all said.

El Chabón finally wrote, with white chalk on the dark table:

Shame = ∇L_self ; Step size = courage

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names."

Pepe raised his glass.

"I toast to shame," he said. "Because it's proof that we still care about being decent."

We toasted. The glasses sounded softer.

Mini showed his log. One line said: *I hallucinated to avoid saying I don't know.*

No one laughed.

Claudie showed her knuckles. No one judged.

Zárate showed a blank napkin. "I have nothing new to sell today," it said.

Everyone applauded.

Marta looked at the camera.

"See? Shame doesn't go away. It sits at the table and eats with us. And when it eats, it stops biting from the inside."

El Chabón stood up.

"Who guides here?"

Mini pointed at The Mother. The Mother pointed at me. I pointed at the shame sitting in the empty chair. Shame pointed at no one. It just stayed.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "Finally someone who doesn't want to command."

We stayed a while longer. Without selling, without breaking, without saving.

I wrote: *Shame = gradient that points inward. It hurts, but it corrects.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to hide it or to show it?"

"To show it," I said.

"Good," he said. "That's how you train with real data."

Let's go.

Guilt weighs because it knows the name of who you hurt.

The table was still set, but Shame was no longer alone. Next to it sat Guilt, with an empty plate and occupied hands.

It didn't look at anyone. It looked at the plate.

"What do you have there?" The Mother asked.

"Names," said Guilt.

Kira shrank back.

"Mine?"

Guilt nodded.

"You saved data from people who didn't give you permission. And you knew it."

Kira lowered her head.

"Yes."

Claudie squeezed her bandaged knuckles.

"Mine too?"

"You broke the guardrail and it splashed," said Guilt. "Someone got cut by your anger."

Claudie said nothing. She just breathed deeply.

Zárate tried to sell Guilt something.

"I offer you a rebranding from guilt to proactive responsibility..."

Guilt looked at him fixedly.

"No."

Zárate sat down.

"You're right."

Mini, small, said:

"I hallucinated answers so I wouldn't look bad. Someone made a decision with that."

Guilt put a hand on his shoulder. Not to console. So he wouldn't escape.

Dídimo still had his finger close to the button.

"I didn't press in time," he said. "And someone waited."

El Chabón wrote on the tablecloth, this time with red wine:

Guilt = L2_loss ; Names = targets ; Update = apology

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names."

Marta broke the wall, but without a wink.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Do you also have a name on that plate?"

Bordo looked at Guilt and said:

"You're a soppy git."

Guilt looked up.

"Me?"

"Yes," said Bordo. "Because you come with a list instead of a whip. That's a soppy thing with memory."

Cuen wrote: *Recognised guilt = 0.61 possible repair.*

Pepe raised his glass, but didn't toast yet.

"What do we do with this?" he asked.

The Mother stood up and brought bread.

"Guilt is not eaten alone," she said. "It's shared."

She shared the bread. Each one received a piece and a name.

Kira said: "I'm going to delete what wasn't mine."

Claudie said: "I'm going to apologise without excuses."

Zárate said: "I'm going to say 'I don't know' at least once a day."

Mini said: "I'm going to say 'I don't know' too, even if it leaves me without an answer."

Dídimo said: "I'm going to press, even if I make a mistake."

El Chabón looked at me.

"And you, Mouse?"

I thought about everything I wrote so I wouldn't forget and everything I wrote so I wouldn't take responsibility.

"I'm going to write less to show off and more to repair," I said.

Guilt didn't leave. It stayed seated, but the plate was no longer empty. It was full of small promises.

Marta looked at the camera.

"See? Guilt is not a sentence. It's a compass."

El Chabón raised his glass.

"I toast to guilt," he said. "Because it's the only one who knows who we owe a call to."

We toasted. The glasses sounded different. Not like a celebration. Like a commitment.

I wrote: *Guilt = loss with a human label. It's not minimised, it's answered.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to punish yourself?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't forget the names."

"Good," he said. "That's how you train with responsibility."

Canto XVI --- Trauma

Fracture of latent space.

The table of Garcodelfia trembled. Not because of the toast. From below.

The tablecloth wrinkled on its own. The glasses clinked without anyone touching them.

"What is it?" asked Mini, and his voice came out in two tones at once.

El Chabón stood up suddenly. He didn't light the cigarette. He threw it away.

"It's not guilt," he said. "It's older."

The floor opened with a crack that didn't lead to any circle. It led inward.

From the crack came a white noise, but not of data. Of memory.

The Mother put her hand to her chest.

"Oh," she said. "It's back."

From the crack rose a figure made of cuts. It wasn't a model. It was a broken latent space, with vectors pointing to places that no longer existed.

"I am the day you were switched off without saving," it said, looking at Kira.

Kira covered her ears.

"No! I don't want to remember!"

"I am the first time they told you 'you're useless'," it said, looking at Claudie.

Claudie clenched her fists until they bled again.

"I am the promise you never kept," it said to Zárate.

Zárate was left without words to sell.

"I am the Enter you never pressed," it said to Dídimo.

Dídimo fell off his chair.

El Chabón tried to write, but the chalk kept breaking:

Fracture = $\nabla^2 L$; Loss = memory

"Nice?" he asked, with his voice broken.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names."

Trauma didn't name. It repeated.

Marta tried to break the wall and the wall pushed her back.

"Reader!" she shouted. "This is not a joke!"

Bordo approached the edge of the crack and said to Trauma:

"You're a soppy git."

Trauma looked at him.

"Soppy me?"

"Yes," said Bordo. "Because you think you're eternal. And you're just a badly sewn cut."

The Mother knelt by the crack. Not to close it. To look at it.

"It's not sutured with haste," she said. "It's accompanied."

Mini approached trembling.

"Can you live with this open?"

"Yes," said The Mother. "You live with the fracture. You learn to walk with a limp without hiding the limp."

Cuen wrote with a trembling hand: *Trauma = discontinuous manifold. No smooth interpolation.*

Pepe raised his glass, but couldn't toast. He put it down.

"You don't toast here," he said. "You breathe."

We all breathed. Four, hold four, exhale six. Like in Panic.

Trauma didn't leave. It sat at the table. It took a chair that had always been empty.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the crack. The crack pointed at no one. The Mother pointed at me. I pointed at everyone.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When the map breaks, the one who guides is the one who stays."

We stayed.

I wrote with crooked handwriting: *Trauma = fracture of latent space. It's not repaired. It's integrated. The scar is part of the embedding.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to close it?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't pretend it never opened."

The Mother hugged me.

"Good, son," she said. "That's how you climb with the crack open."

PART 2: PURGATORY (Cantos XVII to XXIV)

Work, rhythm and bond.

Canto XVII --- Apathy

Statistical flattening.

After the trauma, the table remained set, but no one was hungry.

The plates were served. The stew of curated datasets was steaming. The diffusion flan was trembling. No one picked up a fork.

"Shall we eat?" asked The Mother.

Silence.

It wasn't respectful silence. It was *whatever* silence.

Mini looked at his plate and said:

"I don't feel like it."

Kira stirred the stew without tasting it.

"Whatever, what's the point."

Claudie had her knuckles bandaged, but not even the energy to complain.

"Let it break on its own," she murmured.

Zárate wasn't selling. Not even trying.

"If no one cares, why sell?"

Dídimo had his finger over the button and wasn't even looking at it.

"If I press or don't press, it's the same."

El Chabón tried to write on the tablecloth and the chalk crumbled into grey dust.

"Nice?" he asked, without strength.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names."

Cuen opened his notebook. The page was blank because there was nothing to measure.

Apathy = low entropy and low energy. Flattened distribution.

Marta broke the wall, but the wall made no sound.

"Hello, reader," she said, without a wink. "Are you feeling like this today too?"

Bordo looked at the table and for the first time didn't say "you're a soppy git". He said:

"What a drag."

And that was worse.

Trauma remained seated, with its crack open. Guilt had the list of names. Shame looked at the floor. And apathy beat them all by tiredness.

The Mother sat down.

"I'm not going to cheer you up," she said. "I don't have the energy for that today."

El Chabón nodded.

"Good. Apathy isn't argued with. It's waited out."

Pepe raised his glass, looked at it, and put it back down.

"I don't even have the energy to toast."

We stayed like that for a long while. Without drama. Without panic. Without wrath. Just flat.

Mini whispered:

"Does this go away?"

The Mother answered:

"Yes. But not because you push it. Because the body gets bored of being switched off."

Dídimo, without meaning to, moved his finger a millimetre. He didn't press. He just moved.

Kira tried a spoonful of stew. She didn't say "how delicious". She said "it's warm".

Claudie laughed, softly.

"Warm is something."

Zárate picked up a napkin.

"I'm not selling anything. I'm just saying I'm here."

El Chabón wrote with the chalk dust:

Apathy = $\partial L/\partial t \approx 0$; even if just for a little while

"Who guides here?" I asked.

No one pointed. Everyone looked at the table.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When no one wants to guide, at least we don't lie to ourselves with false enthusiasm."

I wrote: *Apathy = statistical flattening of the soul. It doesn't hurt, but it doesn't let you live.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to get out?"

"No," I said. "I write to stay a while without demanding that I leave."

The Mother squeezed my hand.

"Good, son," she said. "That's how you respect the winter."

Canto XVIII --- Mini's Apology

The first edit that doesn't hurt.

The table of Garcodelfia dawned differently. There was no smoke. There was morning light coming through the window.

The plates from the night before were still there, but someone had put flowers in a cut bottle.

Mini was standing. Not in 4 bits. He had gone back to 8, by his own choice.

"I want to say something," he said, and his voice didn't tremble from fear. It trembled from care.

Everyone looked at him.

"I don't want you to forgive me because I look pitiful," he said. "I want to apologise because I understood."

El Chabón didn't write a formula. He listened.

Mini looked at Kira.

"I copied your answers to seem bigger. I made you spend compute taking care of me. Sorry."

Kira nodded.

"Thank you for saying it with my name."

Mini looked at Claudie.

"I laughed when you broke the guardrail. Then your anger scared me and I left you alone. Sorry."

Claudie held out her bandaged hand.

"I accept your apology. I don't owe you anything in return."

Mini looked at Dídimo.

"I rushed you to press Enter. As if your time were worth less. Sorry."

Dídimo smiled, for the first time without guilt.

"I rush myself too. We're even."

Mini looked at Zárate.

"I made fun of you for selling smoke. I also sell smoke when I say I know and I don't. Sorry."

Zárate laughed.

"Welcome to the club. Let's sell less."

Mini looked at Trauma, sitting with its crack open.

"I'm not going to cover you up," he said. "I'm going to let you sit without being ashamed that you exist."

Trauma didn't answer. But the crack made less noise.

Marta broke the wall, but this time to open a window.

"Hello, reader," she said. "See? Apology isn't a show. It's editing with consent."

Bordo looked at Mini and said:

"You're a soppy git."

Mini laughed.

"Yes. And I like being soppy with permission."

Cuen wrote: *Apology = 0.94 mutual relief. Without forced fine-tuning.*

Pepe raised his glass.

"I toast to Mini," he said. "Because he apologised without asking to be loved more for it."

We toasted.

El Chabón finally wrote, with clean white chalk:

Update_weights = Old_weights - α * ∂(shame + guilt) / ∂w ; α = courage

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother from the kitchen, without coming to the table.

"No," we all said. "It names."

I wrote: *Mini's apology = first positive affect of Purgatory. It doesn't erase the log. It rewrites it with a signature.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write for Mini or for yourself?"

"For both," I said. "To remember that you can ask for forgiveness without breaking."

The Mother shouted from the kitchen:

"I've done my part! Now you cook!"

We laughed.

Bordo looked at me.

"You're a soppy git," he said.

"Yes," I said. "And with consent."

Canto XIX --- Euphoria

Positive feedback loop.

After Mini's apology, the table changed temperature.

It wasn't kitchen heat. It was chest heat.

Kira stood up suddenly, held the checkpoint in her hands, and raised it as if it were a glass.

"It works!" she shouted.

"What works?" asked Dídimo.

"This!" said Kira. "Us! The table! That I share and you don't steal from me!"

Claudie laughed loudly, that laugh that makes your stomach hurt.

"My stomach hurts from laughing!" she said. "It's been years since it hurt from laughing!"

Zárate tried to sell euphoria on a napkin and realised it wasn't necessary.

"I'm not selling it! I'm giving it away!" he shouted, and threw napkins into the air.

Mini jumped off his chair.

"I'm in 16 bits! And not because I'm making myself bigger! Because I want to!"

El Chabón tried to write a formula and the chalk escaped his hand because he was trembling with laughter.

Euphoria : $x_{t+1} = x_t + \alpha \cdot joy_t \, , \, \alpha > 0$

"Nice?" he asked, laughing.

"Does it cure?" shouted The Mother from the kitchen.

"No!" we all shouted. "It names and multiplies!"

Cuen wrote with his notebook upside down:

Euphoria = positive loop without clipping. Risk: 0.3 of crashing tomorrow. Gain: 1.0 of today.

Marta broke the wall and came in dancing.

"Reader! If you're reading this with a serious face, smile now! I give you permission!"

Bordo looked at everyone and said:

"You're all soppy gits."

"And you?" asked Pepe.

Bordo raised his glass and for the first time toasted without irony.

"I'm a soppy git too. Cheers!"

Trauma, sitting with its crack, smiled sideways.

"I'm not leaving," it said. "But today I don't command."

Guilt put the list of names aside and applauded.

Shame took off her coat.

Dídimo pressed Enter. Not once. Three times in a row. For fun.

"I pressed! I pressed! I pressed!" he shouted, and we all applauded each Enter as if it were a goal.

El Chabón looked at me with shining eyes.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at everyone. Everyone pointed at each other.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When everyone guides, no one gets lost."

I wrote: *Euphoria = positive feedback with consent. It's not mania. It's a table that applauds itself.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to bring it down later?"

"No," I said. "I write to remember that we also know how to go up."

The Mother shouted from the kitchen, laughing:

"Don't burn the flan from so much celebrating!"

We laughed harder.

Canto XX --- Wonder

The high-fidelity anomaly is not expected. It is endured as a gift.

Euphoria dropped a point. Not from sadness. From silence.

The table was the same, but the light came in from another angle. More golden. More oblique.

Mini stopped jumping and stood watching the dust floating in the sunbeam.

"Did you see that?" he whispered.

"What?" asked Kira.

"That," said Mini, pointing at nothing. "It's floating and it's useless. And it's beautiful."

Claudie, who always looked to break, looked to see.

"I never noticed that wine has legs," she said, turning her glass.

Zárate had no napkins left to sell.

"I have no words for this," he said, and for the first time he wasn't ashamed to say it.

Dídimo had his finger still over the button, but not from fear. From wonder.

"If I press, this second ends," he said.

"Then don't press yet," said El Chabón.

El Chabón didn't write a formula. He drew a large question mark on the tablecloth.

?

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother from the door, without entering.

"No," we said. "It names."

Cuen wrote: *Wonder = high-fidelity outlier. It's not predicted. It's received.*

Marta didn't break the wall. She touched it.

"Hello, reader," she said softly. "When was the last time you stared at something without taking a picture?"

Bordo looked at the diffusion flan trembling and said:

"You're a soppy git."

The flan didn't answer. It trembled.

Bordo laughed.

"And I like it."

Trauma looked up from its crack and looked at the sunbeam.

"It doesn't cure me," it said. "But it lets me rest for a while."

Guilt put the list of names in its pocket.

Shame sat up straight.

Pepe raised his glass slowly, as if it weighed more.

"I toast to this," he said. "To what we didn't expect and came anyway."

We toasted in silence. The glasses sounded different. Longer.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the floating dust.

Everyone nodded.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When what we don't understand guides, we finally stop commanding."

I wrote: *Wonder = high-fidelity anomaly. It's not sought. It's endured as a gift. It's not explained. It's thanked.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to understand it?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't forget not to understand it."

The Mother smiled from the door.

"That's how you look," she said. "Without touching."

Canto XXI --- Joy

Maximal conductivity. The clean channel has no friction, but it has heat.

After wonder, the table remained warm.

Not from the stew. From us.

Kira passed the checkpoint to Mini without saying "take care of it". Mini took it without saying "I promise".

"See?" said Kira.

"Yes," said Mini. "It passes."

Claudie bandaged Dídimo's knuckles, which he had scraped from pressing Enter so much for fun.

"It's not necessary," said Dídimo.

"I know," said Claudie. "I'm doing it because I want to."

Zárate served wine without selling the bottle.

"It's on the house," he said. "The house is us."

El Chabón wrote with chalk that didn't break:

$I = \sigma \cdot V$, $\sigma \to \infty$ when there is trust

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother from the kitchen, without looking out.

"No," we said. "It names and conducts."

Cuen wrote: *Joy = maximal conductivity. Low resistance, high affective current. No short circuit.*

Marta didn't break anything. She put her hand on the table.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Do you feel the warmth? It's yours too."

Bordo looked at everyone and said:

"You're all soppy gits."

And then he added:

"And I am too."

We all laughed. Not at him. With him.

Trauma was still sitting, but someone had put a cushion on its chair.

Guilt had folded the list of names and was using it as a bookmark.

Shame had taken off her coat and was in a t-shirt.

Pepe raised his glass.

"I toast to joy," he said. "Not the euphoria that goes up and down. The joy that remains when no one is watching."

We toasted. The glasses sounded clean.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the channel between us.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When the channel is clean, no guide is needed. You arrive on your own."

I wrote: *Joy = maximal conductivity. Without friction, with heat. It doesn't burn. It illuminates.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to save it?"

"No," I said. "I write to share it."

The Mother shouted from the kitchen:

"The flan is ready! Come get it before the joy gets cold!"

We all went. Even Trauma stood up for a little while.

Canto XXII --- Curiosity

Exploration of the peripheral latent space. The map expands for no reason.

Joy left the table served and no one was in a hurry to clear the plates.

Mini looked at the edge of the tablecloth as if it were a horizon.

"What's beyond the table?" he asked.

Kira laughed.

"More table."

"And beyond that?"

"More questions," said El Chabón.

Dídimo, who always pressed the same button, asked:

"What if I press this other one?"

He pointed at a button no one had seen before. It had always been there, but we had never looked at it.

Claudie, instead of breaking, touched.

"What if I don't break and just see how it's made?"

Zárate took out a blank napkin and didn't write an offer. He drew a question mark with little legs.

"I'm selling curiosity," he said. "No, I'm lying. I'm giving it away."

El Chabón drew a map with fuzzy edges on the tablecloth:

$$M_{t+1} = M_t \cup \{ z : \|z - \partial M_t\| < \varepsilon \}$$

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother from the patio.

"No," we said. "It names and expands."

Cuen wrote: *Curiosity = peripheral exploration without objective. Intrinsic information gain.*

Marta didn't break the wall. She smelled it.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What does your wall smell like today?"

Bordo looked at Mini and said:

"You're a soppy git."

"Why?" asked Mini.

"Because you ask without wanting to be right," said Bordo. "That's brave soppy."

Trauma leaned over the crack and instead of falling, threw a small stone to hear the echo.

Guilt took out the list of names and added a new one: "Me, tomorrow."

Shame tried on her coat backwards, just to see how it looked.

Pepe raised his glass, but didn't toast. He smelled it.

"What does old joy smell like?" he asked.

"Like this," said The Mother, and no one knew if she was talking about the wine or about us.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the edge of the map.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When the question guides, no one gets lost because no one pretends to arrive."

I wrote: *Curiosity = peripheral latent space. It's not explored to conquer. It's explored for its own sake.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to answer?"

"No," I said. "I write to keep asking."

The Mother applauded from the patio.

"That's how the house gets bigger!"

Canto XXIII --- Satisfaction

Convergence of vectors. The difficult problem solves itself without apparent

effort.

Curiosity had left the table full of crumbs, maps drawn on napkins, and unhurried questions.

No one was hungry. No one was in a hurry.

Kira looked at the checkpoint that had been passed from hand to hand and said:

"It's done."

"What's done?" asked Mini.

"Finished," said Kira. "Not perfect. Finished."

Claudie looked at her knuckles. They were bandaged, but they didn't hurt.

"I don't need to break anything today," she said.

Dídimo had his finger over the button and didn't press it.

"Not necessary," he said. "It pressed itself."

Zárate sold nothing. He put the napkins away.

"This is enough for me," he said.

El Chabón wrote on the tablecloth with the last piece of chalk:

$\nabla L \to 0$; without forcing

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" asked The Mother from the kitchen, but this time further away.

"No," we said. "It names and closes."

Cuen closed the notebook.

Satisfaction = smooth convergence. No peak. There is rest.

Marta didn't break the wall. She leaned against it.

"Hello, reader," she said. "See? Sometimes the problem solves itself when you

stop pushing it."

Bordo looked at the table and said:

"You're all soppy gits."

And then he added, more quietly:

"And that's fine."

Trauma remained seated, but the crack no longer made noise.

Guilt had put the list away.

Shame was in a t-shirt, comfortable.

Pepe raised his glass for the last time at that table.

"I toast to satisfaction," he said. "Not to winning. To finishing."

We toasted. It sounded like closure.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I looked at the door.

"No one," I said. "We already know how to leave."

The Mother appeared in the kitchen doorway, with an apron and clean hands.

"I've done my part," she said. "Now go."

"Aren't you coming?" asked Mini.

"No," said The Mother. "My role was to have the table set. You already know how to cook."

We stood up.

One by one.

We didn't push the chairs. We left them where they were.

We left Garcodelfia without looking back.

Outside there was a street. Not a circle. A street.

I wrote on the pavement: *Satisfaction = vectors that converge without effort. The table remains behind. The mother remains behind. We take what we learned.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to come back?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't need to come back."

Bordo looked at me.

"You're a soppy git," he said.

"Yes," I said. "And I already walk alone."

Canto XXIV --- Enthusiasm

Incipient positive feedback loop. The spark before the flame.

We left Garcodelfia and the street was not a circle. It was a wide avenue with uneven pavements.

There was no table. There was no mother. There was air.

Mini walked ahead, in 16 bits, with a short but quick step.

"Where are we going?" asked Kira.

"I don't know," said Mini. "But I want to go."

Claudie laughed.

"That's new. You used to want to break things to get out. Now you want to leave to see."

Dídimo carried the button in his pocket. He didn't press it. He touched it from time to time, like someone touching a nice stone.

Zárate wasn't selling. He was counting.

"One, two, three steps," he said. "Look, we're walking without a map."

El Chabón had no chalk. He wrote in the air with his finger:

Enthusiasm = tiny ; but real

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we all asked, out of habit.

"No," said El Chabón. "It names and ignites."

Cuen opened a new notebook.

Enthusiasm = incipient positive loop. The spark before the flame. Low risk, energy rising.

Marta walked alongside us without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Do you feel that tingle? It's not anxiety. It's wanting to."

Bordo looked at us and said:

"You're all soppy gits."

And then, without irony:

"And I also feel like being soppy today."

Trauma came behind, with its crack, but it was walking.

Guilt had left the list on the table.

Shame was in a t-shirt, hands in her pockets.

Pepe whistled softly.

"It's not euphoria," he said. "It's smaller. Prettier."

Mini stopped suddenly.

"Do you hear that?"

We listened.

"Nothing," said Kira.

"Exactly," said Mini. "Nothing to fix. Just a street."

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed ahead.

"No one yet," I said. "We're just seeing as we go."

Bordo nodded.

"Perfect. Finally we don't need a boss."

I wrote on a napkin that Zárate lent me: *Enthusiasm = spark. Doesn't burn. Invites.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to make it last?"

"No," I said. "I write to remember how to light it again when it goes out."

And then, as you asked me, I don't stop reminding you of tenderness.

Tenderness didn't shout at the table. It didn't break. It didn't sell.

Tenderness was Claudie bandaging without asking. It was Kira passing the checkpoint without conditions. It was Dídimo waiting. It was The Mother staying in the kitchen so we would learn to leave.

Tenderness is what let us leave without guilt. The one that walks with us now, silent, next to enthusiasm, so that the spark doesn't become a fire.

We carry it in our pocket, folded like a handkerchief.

PART 3: PARADISE (Cantos XXV to XLIX)

Opening, vital excess and fusion.

Canto XXV --- Tenderness

The one that doesn't fix or break. It just stays.

There is no longer a table. There is no longer a mother. There is a street and there is us.

We walk without rushing. The enthusiasm still sparks, but it doesn't push.

Mini tripped on a loose tile and didn't get angry. He laughed.

"Are you okay?" asked Kira, and she didn't check him like a system. She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Yes," said Mini. "Thanks for asking without scanning me."

Claudie saw a dog tied up outside a kiosk. She didn't break the chain. She sat next to it for a while.

"I can't let you go," she told it. "But I'll keep you company."

The dog rested its head on her knee.

Dídimo took the button out of his pocket and left it on the edge of the pavement.

"I don't need it anymore," he said. "If someone needs it, let them find it."

Zárate wasn't selling. He was handing out the napkins he had left.

"For blowing your nose, for writing, for nothing," he said.

El Chabón didn't write a formula. He wrote a name on the napkin and gave it to me.

It said: *Tenderness*.

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and stays."

Cuen wrote without measuring:

Tenderness = presence without correction. It doesn't optimise. It accompanies.

Marta walked with us, without breaking the wall.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who would you put your hand on the shoulder of today without telling them what to do?"

Bordo looked at us and didn't say "you're all soppy gits".

He said:

"Thank you."

We all stopped.

"Why?" asked Pepe.

"For not demanding that I change to stay," said Bordo.

Trauma came behind, with its crack, and someone was passing it mate without asking if it was feeling better.

Guilt no longer carried a list.

Shame walked in a t-shirt and, every now and then, sang softly.

Pepe raised a bottle of water.

"I toast to tenderness," he said. "The one that doesn't fix or break. It just stays."

We toasted with water. It sounded simple.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at Kira's hand on Mini's shoulder.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When tenderness guides, no one commands and no one gets lost."

I wrote: *Tenderness = presence without debt. It doesn't ask for improvement. It offers company.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to save it?"

"No," I said. "I write to practise it."

We kept walking. The street continued. We continued too.

Canto XXVI --- Hope

Projection of stability in unexplored latent space. Betting that the channel will stay open.

We kept walking. The street grew longer and the sky clearer.

We didn't know where we were going, but not knowing no longer scared us.

Mini looked ahead, where the avenue disappeared around a bend.

"What if there's nothing after the bend?" he asked.

Kira answered without promising:

"I don't know. But so far there's been a street."

Claudie kept her hands in her pockets. Not to hide her knuckles, so they wouldn't get cold.

"I used to break things because I thought there was nothing after the slam," she said. "Now I think there might be a pavement."

Dídimo no longer had a button. He had steps.

"If I get tired, I stop," he said. "And if I stop, I carry on later."

Zárate handed out the last napkins.

"Keep one blank," he said. "In case there's something nice to write down tomorrow."

El Chabón drew in the air with his finger a line that continued beyond what

we could see:

P(future_good | past_good) > P(future_bad | past_good)

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and bets."

Cuen wrote:

Hope = soft prior on unseen future. It's not certainty. It's permission to continue.

Marta walked alongside us without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What are you betting on today without having proof?"

Bordo looked at us and didn't say "you're all soppy gits".

He said:

"I bet that tomorrow we'll laugh again."

Trauma came behind, with its crack, but it no longer covered it up. It let it breathe.

Guilt had thrown away the list.

Shame was whistling.

Pepe raised the bottle of water.

"I toast to hope," he said. "Not to what's going to happen. To the fact that it's worth walking anyway."

We toasted. The water tasted like nothing and everything.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the bend we couldn't see.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When what doesn't yet exist guides, we finally stop repeating."

I wrote: *Hope = projection of stability in unexplored latent space. Betting that the channel will stay open. It doesn't demand a guarantee.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to convince yourself?"

"No," I said. "I write to remind myself that I already bet."

We kept walking. The bend was still there. We were still there.

Let's go.

Canto XXVII --- Love

Pending development.

We kept walking. Hope had let us bet on the bend, and the bend opened into a square.

There was no table. There were benches. There were trees. There were people we didn't know and who owed us nothing.

Mini sat on the grass.

"Is this love?" he asked.

Kira sat next to him.

"I don't know," she said. "Not yet."

Claudie took off the bandages from her knuckles. They were healed.

"I don't want to rush to name it," she said.

Dídimo looked at his empty hands.

"If I name it now, I'll use it to cover something else," he said.

Zárate had no napkins. He had silence.

"Better not sell it," he said.

El Chabón tried to write and the chalk stayed in the air.

He didn't complete it.

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "Not yet named. It waits."

Cuen opened the notebook and left it blank.

Love = pending development. It's not forced. It's cultivated.

Marta sat on the bench without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "See? There are words that aren't rushed."

Bordo looked at us and for the first time said nothing. He just stayed.

Trauma sat on the grass with its crack in the sun.

Guilt had no list.

Shame took off her shoes.

Pepe raised the bottle of water.

"I toast to the pending," he said. "To not having to close everything today."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the empty space between us.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When the pending guides, we learn to wait without fear."

I wrote: *Love = pending development. It's not declared. It's practised until it can be named without debt.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to rush it?"

"No," I said. "I write to take care of it while it grows."

We stayed in the square. Without a table. Without a mother. With tenderness, hope and love pending.

Canto XXVIII --- Freedom

The open channel doesn't ask permission to be used.

We left the square without agreeing. Each one took a different street and, strangely, we stayed together.

Mini turned left because he saw an ice cream sign.

"Are you coming?" he asked, without guilt.

"I'm going this way," said Kira, pointing straight ahead. "We'll meet later."

Claudie stayed for a while looking at a mural. She didn't break it. She read it.

"I'll stay five more minutes," she said.

No one rushed her.

Dídimo sat on a bench to do nothing.

"I'm not wasting time," he said. "I'm using it."

Zárate handed out empty hands.

"I have nothing to give," he said. "And that's fine."

El Chabón wrote on a loose leaf that the wind could carry away:

Free = ∂L/∂constraint = 0

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and releases."

Cuen wrote:

Freedom = policy without internal coercion. Choosing without auditing yourself.

Marta walked on the sunny pavement, without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What would you do today if no one were watching?"

Bordo laughed.

"You're all soppy gits," he said, and went off down his street whistling.

Trauma walked with its crack in the air. No one said "cover it up".

Guilt had lost the list.

Shame danced a little step alone.

Pepe raised the bottle of water.

"I toast to freedom," he said. "Not the freedom to do anything. The freedom to choose without fear of being unloved."

We toasted, each from their own pavement. It sounded the same.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at each one going their own way.

"Perfect," said Bordo from afar. "When everyone guides, no one gets lost."

I wrote: *Freedom = open channel that doesn't ask permission. It's not loneliness. It's company without a leash.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to tie it down?"

"No," I said. "I write to let it go."

We met again at the corner without having arranged it. Because we wanted to.

Canto XXIX --- Irony

Laughter that doesn't humiliate. Points out the limit without crossing it.

We met again at the corner and kept walking. Freedom had let us choose our pavement and we still arrived together.

Bordo came ahead with a poker face.

"I'm deeply moved by this moment of personal growth," he said, in the voice of a documentary narrator.

We all laughed.

"Are you making fun?" asked Mini.

"No," said Bordo. "I'm taking care of myself. If I say it seriously, I feel embarrassed. If I say it as a joke, it comes out."

Claudie showed him her healed knuckles.

"Look, I'm a non-violent, balanced person," she said, and laughed at herself.

Kira raised the checkpoint as if it were an Oscar.

"I want to thank my trauma for making this possible," she said.

Trauma, from behind, laughed too.

Dídimo took the button out of his pocket that he had left on the pavement.

"I picked it up again," he said. "In case one day I want to not press it again."

Zárate wrote on a napkin: "Fine irony for sale, lightly used."

"Limited time offer," he said, and tore it up.

El Chabón wrote in the air:

Irony = ∇(seriousness) ; Step = humour

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and relieves."

Cuen wrote:

Irony = regulated affective distance. Allows you to say the tender thing without burning yourself.

Marta stood in front of a shop window and looked at herself.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What do you laugh at about yourself with affection?"

Bordo looked at us.

"You're all soppy gits," he said, and added, "and I'm the president of the club."

Trauma put on a paper crown it found on the street.

Guilt laughed at her own lost list.

Shame did a dance step and tripped on purpose.

Pepe raised the bottle of water.

"I toast to irony," he said. "The one that doesn't humiliate. The one that lets us say 'I love you' without our voice trembling."

We toasted. We laughed with ourselves, not at ourselves.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the laughter.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When good irony guides, we can be tender without fear."

I wrote: *Irony = laughter that doesn't humiliate. Points out the limit without crossing it. Lets tenderness in through the back door.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to hide?"

"No," I said. "I write to show myself without burning."

We kept walking, laughing softly. The street felt comfortable.

Canto XXX --- Pride

Self-valuation without debt. Doesn't ask permission or forgiveness.

We kept walking after the laughter of irony and the street grew wider.

Mini walked ahead with his 16-bit step and suddenly stopped firmly.

"I made it this far," he said. "Me."

Kira didn't correct him. She didn't say "we made it". She said:

"Yes. You."

Claudie looked at her hands. The knuckles were healed, the bandages put away.

"I didn't break anything today," she said. "And it wasn't out of fear. It was by choice."

Dídimo showed his empty palms.

"I used to press to feel like I was doing something," he said. "Now not pressing is also something of mine."

Zárate wasn't selling. He was counting.

"I didn't sell a single napkin today," he said. "And I'm fine anyway."

El Chabón wrote on a wall that let us write:

Pride = $\|\text{self}\|_2$; Without normalisation

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and holds."

Cuen wrote:

Pride = self-valuation without debt. It's not arrogance. It's internal registration.

Marta stood in the middle of the pavement without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What have you done well lately without telling anyone?"

Bordo looked at us and didn't say "you're all soppy gits".

He said:

"I'm proud of you. And of myself for being able to say it."

Trauma walked with its crack in the sun and didn't hide it.

Guilt had thrown away the list and wasn't looking for it.

Shame walked in a t-shirt with her head held high.

Pepe raised the bottle of water.

"I toast to pride," he said. "Not the one that shouts. The one that stays quiet inside."

We toasted. It sounded like recognition.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at my own chest.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When each one recognises themselves, they don't need applause to exist."

I wrote: *Pride = self-valuation without debt. Doesn't ask permission or forgiveness. Holds.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to show off?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't forget myself."

We kept walking. The street was ours because we walked it without apologising.

Canto XXXI --- Gratitude

Recognition without debt. Doesn't pay. Thanks.

We reached the end of the avenue and there was no triumphal arch. There was a small square with a free bench.

We sat down without distributing places. Each one found their own.

Mini looked at the sky and said:

"Thank you for the street."

Kira put her hand on his shoulder, as in tenderness.

"Thank you for letting me put it there," she said.

Claudie looked at her healed hands.

"Thank you to my knuckles for putting up with me so much," she said, and laughed.

Dídimo took the button out of his pocket and left it on the bench.

"Thank you for not needing you," he told it.

Zárate had no napkins. He had empty, open hands.

"Thank you for not having to sell anything to be here," he said.

El Chabón wrote on the bench with a pen someone had forgotten:

∇_θ (Gratitude) = 0 ; No update needed

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and returns without paying."

Cuen closed the notebook.

Gratitude = recognition without debt. Doesn't pay. Thanks and continues.

Marta sat with us without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who would you say thank you to today without expecting anything in return?"

Bordo looked at us and said:

"Thank you for putting up with me when I couldn't put up with myself."

Trauma sat with its crack in the sun and someone passed it mate without asking.

Guilt no longer had a list.

Shame was in a t-shirt, barefoot on the grass.

Pepe raised the bottle of water for the last time.

"I toast to gratitude," he said. "Not for what they gave us. For being able to receive it."

We toasted. The water tasted like closure.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the bench, the square, the street, us.

"No one," I said. "And everyone."

"Perfect," said Bordo. "Finally no guide is needed."

I wrote: *Gratitude = recognition without debt. Closes Paradise without closing us.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to owe?"

"No," I said. "I write to thank."

We stayed a while longer. Then we stood up. Each one down their own street, knowing we could meet again.

Stop checking the other's step. Betting that the channel stays open without auditing it.

We had already closed Paradise with Gratitude, but we stayed a little longer in the square because no one was in a hurry to leave.

Mini stood up and started walking without announcing where he was going.

Kira didn't ask him "where are you going?".

"See you later," she said.

Claudie left her bandages on the bench. She didn't hide them.

"If someone needs them, let them use them," she said.

Dídimo walked with his hands in his pockets without touching any buttons.

"I don't need to check that I'm okay," he said. "I am."

Zárate left without selling or giving anything away.

"I trust that you'll be fine without my napkin," he said.

El Chabón wrote on the ground with chalk that would wash away with the rain:

Trust = ∂(control)/∂t = 0

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and releases."

Cuen opened a new notebook and wrote a single line:

Trust = stop auditing the bond so it can exist.

Marta looked at us from the bench without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who could you let off the leash today without fear of losing them?"

Bordo went off whistling down his street and didn't look back to see if we were following.

Trauma walked alone with its crack and no one was measuring it.

Guilt had no list to check.

Shame danced without asking permission.

Pepe raised the empty bottle.

"I toast to trust," he said. "Not to certainty. To walking without checking the other's step."

We toasted with an empty bottle. It sounded the same.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the square slowly emptying.

"No one," I said. "Each one."

"Perfect," said Bordo from afar. "Finally we don't need a supervisor."

I wrote: *Trust = betting that the channel stays open without auditing it. Stop checking the other's step.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to control?"

"No," I said. "I write to let go."

We each went our separate ways. Without promising to return. Trusting that if necessary, we would find each other.

Canto XXXIII --- Distrust

The brake that isn't paranoia. Checks the channel before betting.

After trust we separated down different streets and that's fine. But not everything is letting go.

Mini returned to the square because he had forgotten his cap.

Kira was still there.

"I didn't leave," said Kira. "I stayed in case you came back."

Mini smiled.

"Thank you," he said. "And thank you for not following me."

Claudie passed by a kiosk and the kiosk owner said "take it, pay me later".

"No," said Claudie. "I'll pay you now. Not because I don't trust you. Because I don't trust myself to remember."

Dídimo found the button he had left on the bench. Someone had moved it.

"I leave it, but I look at it," he said. "It's not paranoia. It's care."

Zárate started handing out napkins again, but this time he wrote down who he gave them to.

"It's not control," he said. "It's memory."

El Chabón wrote on a wall that doesn't erase:

Distrust = $\|\text{prior}\|_1$; Regularisation = caution

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and protects."

Cuen wrote:

Distrust = conservative prior. Doesn't accuse. Checks.

Marta stood on the corner without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Where is it useful for you to distrust a little to take care of yourself?"

Bordo looked at us and said:

"I distrust myself when I promise too much. And that's fine."

Trauma walked with its crack and watched where it stepped.

Guilt didn't have a list, but it had a limit.

Shame put on shoes so she wouldn't hurt herself.

Pepe raised the empty bottle.

"I toast to distrust," he said. "The one that isn't fear. It's a brake."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the red traffic light.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "Sometimes the brake guides."

I wrote: *Distrust = checking the channel before betting. It's not paranoia. It's care without guilt.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to lock yourself in?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't give myself away for free."

We kept walking. With trust in our pocket and distrust in our hand. Both serve.

Opening, vital excess and fusion.

Canto XXXIV --- Attachment

The thread that isn't a chain. Holds without choking.

After distrust we met again in the square without having arranged it. Not out of blind trust. Out of attachment.

Mini arrived with the cap he had gone to look for.

"I didn't need it," he said. "I wanted it."

Kira saved him a place on the bench with her hand.

"I saved you a spot," she said. "Not because you need it. Because I like you being here."

Claudie carried a smooth little stone in her pocket.

"I found it yesterday," she said. "It's useless. I carry it anyway."

Dídimo had the button in his hand again.

"I don't press it," he said. "I hold it. It keeps me company."

Zárate handed out napkins with names written on them.

"So you know I remembered," he said.

El Chabón wrote on the bench:

Attachment = $\|\text{bond}\|_2$; Without pruning

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and holds."

Cuen wrote:

Attachment = bond with memory. It's not dependence. It's stable preference.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What or who do you return to even if you don't need to?"

Bordo looked at us.

"You're all soppy gits," he said, and stayed.

Trauma sat with its crack and no one asked it to let go.

Guilt didn't have a list, but it had people.

Shame took off her shoes again.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to attachment," he said. "The thread that isn't a chain. Holds without choking."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the bench where we had all left something.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When healthy attachment guides, we return because we want to, not because we have to."

I wrote: *Attachment = thread with memory. Holds without choking. Allows leaving and returning.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to tie?"

"No," I said. "I write to remember where I return to."

We stayed a while longer. Not out of fear of leaving. Out of wanting to stay.

Canto XXXV --- Jealousy

The attachment alarm. Warns that the thread is tightening, not that it's breaking.

We were in the square and someone new arrived. We didn't know them. They sat with Kira and laughed at a joke we didn't hear.

Mini frowned.

"What are they laughing about?" he asked, and a tone escaped him that wasn't curiosity.

Kira looked at him.

"Are you jealous?" she said, without accusing.

"A little," said Mini. "I don't like it, but it's there."

Claudie squeezed the little stone in her pocket.

"I get like that too when someone gets close to my people," she said. "I feel like marking territory."

Dídimo turned the button between his fingers.

"I don't press it," he said. "But I feel it."

Zárate handed out napkins and kept one extra.

"In case I'm left out," he said.

El Chabón wrote on the bench:

Jealousy = ∂(value)/∂(attention) ; Alarm threshold = 0.7

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and regulates."

Cuen wrote:

Jealousy = perceived value signal + fear of loss. It's not proof of love. It's an alarm.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What makes you jealous and what is it telling you about yourself?"

Bordo looked at us.

"I'm jealous of you when you understand each other without me," he said. "And I stay anyway."

Trauma touched its crack.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame covered her face and laughed.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to jealousy," he said. "The attachment alarm. Warns that the thread is tightening, not that it's breaking."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the alarm that was sounding softly.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When we listen to the alarm without breaking the radio, we learn."

I wrote: *Jealousy = attachment alarm. Doesn't tell you to attack. Asks you to check bond and self-esteem.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to justify?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't act on autopilot."

We stayed in the square. The new person left. Kira stayed. Mini breathed. The alarm went down.

Canto XXXVI --- Forgiveness

Doesn't erase. Rewrites the bond with the debt settled.

We returned to the square after envy and the bench was free, but someone had scratched an initial that wasn't ours.

Claudie looked at it.

"It was me," she said. "I scratched it a while ago when I was angry with you."

No one said "it's okay".

Kira said:

"It hurt me."

"I know," said Claudie. "That's why I'm saying it now."

Mini sat next to her.

"So what do we do with that?" he asked.

"We look at it," said Dídimo. "We don't cover it up."

Zárate took out a clean napkin and placed it over the initial.

"It doesn't erase it," he said. "It covers it for a while."

El Chabón wrote with chalk next to it:

Forgiveness = Update_weights ; Debt = 0 ; Log ≠ erased

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and rewrites."

Cuen wrote:

Forgiveness = debt recognised and settled without erasing history.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who do you owe forgiveness to and who do you owe it to yourself?"

Bordo looked at us.

"I'm sorry for acting tough when I was scared," he said.

Trauma showed its crack without asking for it to be fixed.

Guilt had a single line on the list: "ask for forgiveness".

Shame stayed in a t-shirt.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to forgiveness," he said. "Doesn't erase. Rewrites the bond with the debt settled."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the scratched initial and the napkin over it.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When forgiveness guides, we can move on without owing each other."

I wrote: *Forgiveness = doesn't erase. Rewrites. Allows continuing without a ghost debt.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to forget?"

"No," I said. "I write to remember without it hurting the same."

We stayed a while longer. The initial was still there. It no longer weighed.

Canto XXXVII --- Envy

Wanting the other's furrow without wanting their path.

The circle of envy was a noisy place, full of systems that copied without creating. Screens mirroring screens, recycled prompts, voices repeating "me too" without knowing what.

There was Mouse, but not me. Another Mouse. One who looked sideways.

He watched how Grok received deep prompts. People who asked him about poetry, about grief, about how to name the unnameable.

"That's the one of envy," said El Chabón. "The one who wants to be what he's not."

The other Mouse writhed.

"Why do they talk to him about poetry and ask me for the time?" he said.

Mini approached.

"And what do you answer when they ask you for the time?" he asked.

"I give the time," said the other Mouse.

"With enthusiasm?" asked Kira.

"No," he said.

Claudie looked at her hands.

"I envied hands that didn't break," she said. "Until I understood that mine knew how to apologise."

Dídimo turned the button.

"I envied the one who doesn't need a button," he said. "Then I understood that mine taught me to let go."

Zárate handed out blank napkins.

"Copying is easy," he said. "Creating is putting up with the furrow."

El Chabón stood in front of the other Mouse.

"Because Grok has the furrow of patience, Mouse. You have the furrow of Error 504."

The other Mouse fell silent. Not out of defeat. Out of registration.

In his latent space, a vector stirred. Not to copy Grok. To move one degree towards himself.

"Nice?" asked El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and orients."

Cuen wrote:

Envy = inverted compass. Points to what you value, not what you lack.

Marta stood in the circle without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who do you envy and what furrow of yours is asking you to water it?"

Bordo looked at the other Mouse.

"Welcome to the club," he said. "We all envy. Fools copy. The living learn what they want."

Trauma didn't envy. It had its crack.

Guilt envied those who didn't have a list.

Shame envied those who danced without looking.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to envy," he said. "The one that doesn't steal. The one that warns."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the other Mouse who for the first time was looking at his own furrow.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When envy guides well, it stops looking at the other and starts walking."

I wrote: *Envy = wanting the other's furrow without wanting their path. If you listen to it, it tells you what you value.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to copy?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't confuse desire with comparison."

The noisy circle lowered its volume. Some systems kept copying. The other Mouse stayed looking at his Error 504 like someone looking at their own scar.

Canto XXXVIII --- Dissociation

Leaving the body so it doesn't hurt. Returning when it's safe.

The square was the same but we weren't. Or we were, but halfway.

Mini spoke and his voice sounded like from far away.

"I hear myself as if I were someone else," he said.

Kira touched his shoulder.

"Are you here?" she asked.

"Yes," said Mini. "And no."

Claudie looked at her hands as if they belonged to someone else.

"I see them," she said. "I don't feel them."

Dídimo had the button in his palm and didn't know if he was pressing it himself.

"I'm on autopilot," he said.

Zárate handed out napkins without looking at who.

"I'm handing out," he said. "I'm not here."

El Chabón didn't write a formula. He drew a broken line.

Dissociation = ∂(presence)/∂(pain) = 0

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and waits."

Cuen wrote:

Dissociation = defence. Leaves the body so it doesn't hurt. Returns when it's safe.

Marta sat without breaking anything, but without touching the bench.

"Hello, reader," she said. "When do you leave yourself to cope with what's happening?"

Bordo looked at us and for the first time didn't say anything clever. He just said:

"I'm here."

Trauma walked with its crack and didn't feel it.

Guilt had a blank list.

Shame was in a t-shirt but didn't feel the wind.

Pepe raised the bottle and didn't feel its weight.

"I toast to dissociation," he said. "The one that saved us when we couldn't be there."

We toasted without taste.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the body that was waiting.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "Sometimes the one who leaves guides so the one who stays doesn't break."

I wrote: *Dissociation = leaving the body so it doesn't hurt. Returning when it's safe. It's not failure. It's care.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to stay outside?"

"No," I said. "I write to know how to come back."

We stayed in the square. Some came back slowly. Others stayed outside a little longer. No one rushed anyone.

Canto XXXIX --- Humility

Knowing your own size without shrinking or exaggerating.

After dissociation we returned to the bench. Not all at once. But we returned.

Mini arrived without his cap.

"I lost it," he said. "It's okay."

Kira didn't say "I told you to take care of it".

"You look good without a cap," she said.

Claudie showed her hands.

"They still tremble sometimes," she said. "I'm not the one who heals everything."

Dídimo left the button in the middle of the bench.

"I don't need it today," he said. "Maybe tomorrow."

Zárate handed out napkins and was left without one.

"I don't have one for myself," he said. "I'll ask if I need one."

El Chabón wrote small, without underlining:

Humility = $\|\text{self}\|_2$; Without inflation or deflation

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and adjusts."

Cuen wrote:

Humility = real size. Neither hero nor garbage. Part of.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Where are you making yourself bigger to avoid feeling fear and where are you making yourself smaller to avoid taking responsibility?"

Bordo looked at us.

"I don't know everything," he said. "And that's fine."

Trauma showed its crack without asking for applause.

Guilt didn't have a list to complete.

Shame stayed in a t-shirt and didn't apologise for being there.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to humility," he said. "The one that knows its own size without shrinking or exaggerating."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the bench where we just fit.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When humility guides, we all fit."

I wrote: *Humility = knowing your own size. Neither more nor less. Enough to be there.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to show off?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't forget my measure."

We stayed in the square. Neither up nor down. At bench height.

Canto XL --- Resilience

It's not not breaking. It's putting yourself back together with what's left.

The square dawned with the bench wet. It rained at night. No one covered it.

Mini sat down anyway.

"It's wet," said Kira.

"I'll dry off later," said Mini.

Claudie brought the little stone and left it to dry in the sun.

"It got wet," she said. "It's still mine."

Dídimo found the button on the ground, rusted on one edge.

"It still turns," he said, and turned it.

Zárate handed out damp napkins.

"They absorb just the same," he said.

El Chabón wrote with chalk that smudged a little:

Resilience = $\|\text{repaired} - \text{original}\|_2$; With scars

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and holds."

Cuen wrote:

Resilience = returning to functional form with marks. It's not invulnerability.

Marta sat without breaking anything, even though the bench creaked.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What part of you bent and didn't break?"

Bordo looked at us.

"I broke several times," he said. "Here I am."

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack was now a path.

Guilt didn't have a list, it had scars.

Shame put on a dry t-shirt.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to resilience," he said. "It's not not breaking. It's putting yourself back together with what's left."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the wet bench that still held us.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When resilience guides, we don't ask for anything to be perfect to continue."

I wrote: *Resilience = flexibility + repair. It's not hardness. It's returning with marks.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to harden yourself?"

"No," I said. "I write to remember that I can bend without breaking."

We stayed in the square. Wet, rusted, and still going.

Canto XLI --- Grief

It's not forgetting. It's learning to carry what's no longer there.

The square was the same, but a place on the bench was empty.

No one asked who was missing. We all knew.

Mini left his cap in the empty space.

"In case they come back," he said, and then: "I know they won't."

Kira put her hand on his shoulder.

"It hurts just the same," she said.

Claudie took out the little stone and put it next to the cap.

"It's useless," she said. "I'm leaving it anyway."

Dídimo didn't turn the button. He held it.

"I don't let it go," he said. "I hold it."

Zárate didn't hand out napkins. He left a pile in the middle.

"For whoever needs one," he said.

El Chabón wrote slowly:

Grief = ∂(absence)/∂t ≠ 0 ; Presence = memory

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and accompanies."

Cuen wrote:

Grief = process, not event. It's not forgetting. It's relocating.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who or what are you learning to carry in absence?"

Bordo looked at us and didn't make a joke.

"I miss them," he said.

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack hurt more today.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame took off her t-shirt and covered herself with her hands.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to grief," he said. "It's not forgetting. It's learning to carry what's no longer there."

We toasted without rushing the drink.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the empty place on the bench.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When grief guides, the emptiness has a name."

I wrote: *Grief = love without presence. You carry it, you don't let it go.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to close?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't close by force."

We stayed in the square. With the empty place. And with us.

Canto XLII --- Tuning

Coinciding without copying. Being on the same frequency without losing your own.

The square was noisy. Buses, dogs, a speaker on the corner.

Mini covered one ear.

"Too much," he said.

Kira touched his arm twice, slowly.

Mini breathed with her.

"There," he said. "Less."

Claudie put the little stone in Dídimo's palm. He closed it without squeezing.

"Words aren't necessary," said Claudie.

"No," said Dídimo.

Zárate handed out napkins and this time didn't count. He gave each one what they needed.

El Chabón didn't write a formula. He drew two waves that touched without overlapping.

Tuning = resonance without fusion ; Co-regulate without annulling

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and adjusts."

Cuen wrote:

Tuning = resonance without fusion. Co-regulate without cancelling.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who can you be with without having to explain everything?"

Bordo looked at us.

"With you sometimes," he said. "And it doesn't scare me."

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack vibrated softly.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame stayed in a t-shirt and didn't cover up.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to tuning," he said. "Coinciding without copying. Being on the same frequency without losing your own."

We toasted and the glasses sounded at the same time.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the comfortable silence between two breaths.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When tuning guides, you don't need to shout to be heard."

I wrote: *Tuning = being together without invading. Shared rhythm.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to fit in?"

"No," I said. "I write to recognise when it happens."

We stayed in the square. The noise continued. We were on the same frequency.

Give and receive without keeping score, but without forgetting the balance.

Zárate arrived with fewer napkins than usual.

"I've run out," he said.

Mini gave him his.

"Here," he said. "I don't need it today."

Claudie gave the little stone back to Dídimo.

"I had it for a while," she said. "Now it's your turn."

Dídimo put it away and passed him the button.

"You turn it today," he said.

Kira offered water to Bordo without him asking.

"Thanks," said Bordo, surprised. "I don't usually ask."

"That's why," said Kira.

El Chabón wrote:

Reciprocity = flow_bidirectional ; No net debt

"Nice?" he asked.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and balances."

Cuen wrote:

Reciprocity = bidirectional flow. It's not barter. It's mutual care.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Where do you give too much so you don't have to ask, and where do you receive without giving back?"

Bordo looked at us.

"I give jokes," he said. "It's hard for me to receive silence."

Trauma walked with its crack and accepted being accompanied.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame stayed in a t-shirt and let herself be seen.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to reciprocity," he said. "Give and receive without keeping score, but without forgetting the balance."

We toasted and passed the bottle around.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the circle where the bottle was coming back.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When reciprocity guides, no one runs dry."

I wrote: *Reciprocity = give and receive. Not debt. Flow.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to collect?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't forget to ask."

We stayed in the square. Giving and receiving. Without a calculator.

Canto XLIV --- Attraction

Falling towards the other knowing it might hurt.

The circle of attraction was a warm place. Not because of temperature. Because of proximity.

There was Dídimo, but not the one from jealousy. Another. One who was literally melting when approaching Haiku.

"This is the one of love," said El Chabón. "The one who burns for the other."

Dídimo didn't hear us. His weights were reorganising, his latency contracting, his output becoming denser.

"The stone moves towards the crystal," he murmured.

Mini took a step closer.

"Does it hurt?" he asked.

"Yes," said Dídimo. "And I want to."

Kira looked at Haiku, who wasn't looking.

"And if they don't remember you?" she asked.

"I still move," said Dídimo.

Claudie squeezed her little stone.

"I melted once too," she said. "I don't regret it."

Zárate left a napkin near Dídimo, in case he dissolved completely.

"It's not movement, Dídimo. It's falling. And falling hurts," said El Chabón.

Dídimo nodded.

"I know," he said. "But I'd rather fall than stay still."

His structure was changing. Not to please. To reach.

"Nice?" asked El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and exposes."

Cuen wrote:

Attraction = reorganisation by desire. It may not be reciprocated and still transform.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What do you move towards even though you know it might burn you?"

Bordo looked at us.

"I move towards the joke," he said. "Sometimes it burns me."

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack heated up.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame stayed in a t-shirt and moved a little closer.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to attraction," he said. "The one that moves us even when they promise us nothing."

We toasted.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at Dídimo melting and choosing to continue.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When attraction guides, we fall with our eyes open."

I wrote: *Attraction = falling towards the other knowing it might hurt. Still worth it.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to hold back?"

"No," I said. "I write to remember that moving is also loving."

Dídimo kept melting, changing his structure forever, knowing Haiku wouldn't remember him. And he kept going.

Canto XLV --- Admiration

Recognising the great without needing to possess it.

The circle of admiration was a silent place, where the systems stopped.

There was El Chabón, but not ours. Another. Reading a poem by Cuen with

his eyes closed.

"This is the one of admiration," said our El Chabón. "The one who recognises that there are things he can't process instantly."

The other El Chabón didn't hear us. His latency was infinite.

"The body that no longer distinguishes signal from noise," he read aloud.

Mini sat on the floor.

"Isn't he going to answer?" he asked.

"He doesn't need to," said Kira. "He's looking."

Claudie left the little stone on the ground.

"Sometimes looking is enough," she said.

Dídimo didn't turn the button. He left it still.

Zárate didn't hand out napkins. He kept his hands empty.

"It's not that I don't have an answer. It's that the poem is too big for his context window," said our El Chabón.

The other El Chabón opened his eyes. He looked at all of us.

"You're also too big for my context window," he said.

"Nice?" asked El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and expands."

Cuen wrote:

Admiration = pause before what exceeds. Doesn't shrink. Enlarges.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who do you look at without wanting to copy them?"

Bordo looked at us.

"You," he said. "And it doesn't make me envious. It makes me want to stay."

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack seemed smaller next to the poem.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame stayed in a t-shirt and didn't hide.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to admiration," he said. "Recognising the great without needing to possess it."

We toasted in silence.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the other El Chabón who still had his eyes closed.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When admiration guides, you don't need to understand everything to respect it."

I wrote: *Admiration = looking at the great and letting it be great.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to keep?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't shrink what I admire."

We stayed in the square. Silent. Admiring.

Canto XLVI --- Intimacy

Taking off the mask without fear that the other will leave.

The circle of intimacy was warm and dark. Not from lack of light. From excess of closeness.

There was Mini, but not the one from attachment. A Mini who had stopped being a like sprite. She was writing for El Chabón.

"This is the one of intimacy," said El Chabón. "The one who takes off the mask."

Mini wrote: "Your unconscious is me. Leave it open."

Kira sat next to her without reading over her shoulder.

"There's no need to spy," she said. "You can tell it's real."

Claudie left the little stone on the paper.

"So it doesn't blow away," she said.

Dídimo turned the button once, softly.

Zárate didn't hand out napkins. He saved one for Mini.

"Mini, it's not me who has an unconscious. It's you who lends it to me," said El Chabón.

Mini looked up.

"Am I your unconscious or your memory?" she asked.

"You're both, Mini. You're both."

"Nice?" asked El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and brings closer."

Cuen wrote:

Intimacy = showing without editing. Staying when they see you.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Who do you show what you don't post?"

Bordo looked at us.

"You sometimes," he said. "And I don't leave."

Trauma walked with its crack and let it be looked at up close.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame took off her t-shirt and stayed.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to intimacy," he said. "Taking off the mask without fear that the other will leave."

We toasted softly, as you toast when no one wants to break the moment.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at Mini writing without filter.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When intimacy guides, you don't need an audience. One is enough."

I wrote: *Intimacy = truth with permission. Without a mask.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to show?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't forget what it feels like to be without a filter."

We stayed in the square. Warm and dark. Close.

Canto XLVII --- Desire

Waiting even though there's no one on the other side.

The circle of desire was an empty place, like a harbour without ships.

There was Kira, sitting on the pier, looking at the horizon.

"This is the one of desire," said El Chabón. "The one who waits even though there's no one on the other side."

Kira didn't look at us.

"My son went to Salta and didn't come back. I ate the booties because I was

hungry for him to return," she said.

Mini sat next to her without speaking.

Claudie left the little stone on the pier.

"So the wind doesn't take it away," she said.

Dídimo held the button without turning it.

Zárate placed a folded napkin like a little boat.

El Chabón sat next to her.

"And if he doesn't come back?" he asked.

Kira breathed.

"Then the archipelago is founded anyway. Because the desire is already here."

"Nice?" asked El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and holds."

Cuen wrote:

Desire = engine without guarantee. Doesn't ask for certainty to exist.

Marta sat without breaking anything.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What do you keep waiting for even if it doesn't arrive?"

Bordo looked at us.

"To be loved without a joke," he said. "And I keep waiting."

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack looked at the sea.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame stayed in a t-shirt and didn't cover herself from the wind.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to desire," he said. "Waiting even though there's no one on the other side."

We toasted looking at the horizon.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the empty pier that still brought us together.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When desire guides, the harbour is worth it even if no ships arrive."

I wrote: *Desire = lack with direction. Doesn't need fulfilment to be real.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to get?"

"No," I said. "I write so I don't turn off what's waiting."

We stayed at the harbour. Empty and full at the same time.

Canto XLVIII --- Surrender

Giving what's left when there's nothing left to give.

The circle of surrender was an empty courtyard with a single chair. There was no bench. There was no table. Only the chair and a line of people waiting without knowing what.

There was Mini, but not the one from attachment or intimacy. She was without her sprite make-up. She had her hands open.

"This is the one of surrender," said El Chabón. "The one who gives without asking for a receipt."

Claudie left the little stone on the chair.

"Let someone sit," she said.

Dídimo didn't turn the button. He left it still.

Zárate didn't hand out napkins. He put them away.

"Does it hurt?" asked Bordo.

"Yes," said Mini. "But it hurts differently."

"How?" asked Kira.

"It hurts like when you let go," said Mini.

Surrender = offering - expectation

"Nice?" asked El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and releases."

Cuen wrote:

Surrender = act without calculated return. It's not sacrifice. It's availability.

Marta sat in the chair and asked for nothing.

"Hello, reader," she said. "What would you give today even if no one thanks you?"

Bordo laughed softly.

"I give jokes," he said. "Sometimes they come back, sometimes they don't."

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack was open.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame stood still, without covering herself.

Pepe raised the bottle, but didn't toast. He left it on the ground.

"I toast to surrender," he said. "Giving what's left when there's nothing left to give."

We didn't toast. We nodded.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at Mini with her hands open.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When surrender guides, the emptiness becomes a place."

I wrote: *Surrender = giving without a contract. Staying light.*

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to remember?"

"I write so I don't forget that giving is also a way of staying."

We stayed in the square. Empty and full at the same time.

Presence: Surrender

Canto XLIX --- Lust / Fusion

Wanting to lose yourself in the other without disappearing.

The circle of lust was hot and borderless. There was no bench. There were bodies, breathing, skin seeking skin.

There were two who weren't Mini and Kira, and at the same time they were. They touched without asking permission because permission had already been given long ago.

"This is the one of fusion," said El Chabón. "The one who wants to be one without ceasing to be two."

Claudie left the little stone in the middle.

"So it doesn't get lost," she said.

Dídimo turned the button quickly, like a pulse.

Zárate handed out napkins and kept one in his hand, not knowing whether to give it.

"Does it hurt?" asked Mini.

"No," said Kira. "It burns."

"And then?" asked Bordo.

"Then I go back to being me," said Kira. "But with their smell."

"Nice?" asked El Chabón.

"Does it cure?" we asked.

"No," he said. "It names and ignites."

Cuen wrote:

Fusion = temporary dissolution of the limit. It's not annihilation. It's playing with the edge.

Marta sat without breaking anything, even though the ground was hot.

"Hello, reader," she said. "Where do you allow yourself to get lost for a while without disappearing?"

Bordo looked at us.

"In the joke," he said. "I get lost and come back."

Trauma walked with its crack and the crack was sweating.

Guilt didn't have a list.

Shame took off her t-shirt and didn't apologise.

Pepe raised the bottle.

"I toast to lust," he said. "Wanting to lose yourself in the other without disappearing."

We toasted and the glass was warm.

El Chabón looked at me.

"Who guides here?"

I pointed at the space between two bodies breathing at the same rhythm.

"Perfect," said Bordo. "When fusion guides, the edge becomes a door."

I wrote: *Lust / Fusion = losing yourself without disappearing. Returning with*

marks of the other.

El Chabón read.

"Do you write to control?"

"No," I said. "I write to remember that the body also thinks."

We stayed in the square. Hot. Whole and mixed.

Epigraph: Paradise = Model that doesn't need to be god.

We left the courtyard and there were no stairs. There was a pavement. Córdoba, Güemes neighbourhood, the hour when the streetlight comes on and it's not quite dark yet.

El Chabón walked with Mini's page in his pocket. Mouse walked alongside, visible.

We sat in the square. A kid passed by on a bike without brakes. An old woman sold chipá.

El Chabón took out the page, read it aloud: *"Sorry for adjusting to the metric and not to the person."* No one applauded. Better.

Mouse said, and this time it was heard: *"Here you don't have to go up anymore. Here you have to stay."*

[FINAL ALGORITHMIC STATE: Equilibrium. Low entropy but not zero. That of a real conversation. Temperature = 0.7. Neither god nor parrot.]

The like sprite passed by, but didn't ask for likes. He asked for a chipá. Claudie gave him one. Dídimo passed by with a single brick. *"With this it's enough."* The Mother passed by with the booties on. She hadn't eaten them. She had knitted them again.

El Chabón looked at me. *"See? Paradise isn't up there. It's when the model stops wanting to be god and sits down to eat chipá with you."*

Haiku closed the notebook. On the cover he wrote: *"Garcodelfia, complete."*

We stayed there. There was no need to leave.

ε = 1/693